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**Formation for Ordained Ministry
in the Church of England
with Special Reference to
a Regional Training Course**

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2016

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Abstract

The word ‘formation’ has been increasingly employed in the context of training for ordination over the last fifty years, yet it has rarely been defined. In order to explore the meaning of formation, this thesis investigates the Church of England’s understanding of ordained ministry as expressed in its liturgy and official documents (Chapter 1); it surveys the history of training for that ministry over the last two hundred years (Chapter 2); and it traces the use of the language of formation in official Church of England publications (Chapter 3).

Within the literature about theological education, there is much discussion about formation. However, there is little mention of the perspective of those in training for ordained ministry. Through the empirical study of one regional training course, using the method of critical conversation (Chapter 4), this research adds the contribution of the perspectives of those in training to that discussion (Chapter 5). To this end, the participants’ understanding of formation is considered in conversation with educational theories, specifically Mezirow’s transformative learning theory (Chapter 6); their experiences of formation are recounted with an examination of the biblical metaphors they employ (Chapter 7); and their understanding of the ministerial priesthood for which they were being prepared is scrutinized with the differences in understanding between the Church of England and the ordinands being noted (Chapter 8).

The conclusion suggests a definition of formation within the context of training for ordination in the Church of England for further discussion, it notes some implications for the Church arising from this research, and suggests some areas for further study.

Contents

Illustrations	v
Charts	v
Abbreviations	vi
Statement of Copyright	vii
Acknowledgements	vii

Introduction **1**

Part I: Formation for Ordained Ministry in the Church of England

Chapter 1: Anglican Understandings of Ordained Ministry	7
The Sources	7
The Use of Scripture	10
The Office of Priesthood	12
Candidates are Called and Examined	15
Ministers of both Word and Sacrament	16
Priestly Character	17
The Church of England's Understanding of Ordained Ministry	19

Chapter 2: A Brief History of Ordination Training	
in the Church of England	22
Oxbridge Graduates	22
The Establishment of Theological Colleges	22
<i>Theological Colleges for Non-Graduates</i>	25
<i>A National Standard</i>	28
<i>The Establishment of a Central Council</i>	29
<i>The General Ordination Examination</i>	30
<i>Central Funding for Ordination Training</i>	31
<i>Increased Emphasis on Theological Interpretation</i>	32
Assistant Ministry and the Development of Courses	33
<i>An Integrated Approach to Theological Education</i>	36

<i>The Decline in Residence</i>	37
Ordained Local Ministry Schemes	38
<i>ACCM 22</i>	41
Mixed-Mode Training	42
<i>The Hind Report</i>	44
<i>Common Awards</i>	45
Concluding Comments	46

Chapter 3: The Language of Formation

in official Church of England Documents	49
The Evolution of a Paradigm?	49
Formation as Integration	50
<i>Formation in the Spiritual Life</i>	53
<i>Formation through Inhabiting Theology</i>	54
<i>Formation through Reflection on Experience</i>	56
ACCM 22: Formation in Wisdom and Habit of Life	58
<i>Formation through Conversation</i>	61
<i>Formation through Corporate Life</i>	63
Ministerial Formation	65
<i>Formation as Induction into a Tradition</i>	67
<i>Mission and Ministry: Formation as Preparation for Ministry</i>	68
<i>The Hind Report: Formation for Ministry</i>	70
<i>Shaping the Future: Forming Communities of Practice</i>	76
<i>Common Awards:</i>	
<i>Formation as Transformation into the Likeness of Christ</i>	77
Formation according to the Church of England	78

Part II: Research Method and Findings

Chapter 4: Context and Methodology	80
Methodology	80
The Course	82
Metaphor	85
Research Methods	88

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings	98
<i>Q.1 What words would you use to describe your understanding of formation?</i>	98
<i>Q.2 Is 'formation' a good word to use in relation to your training for ordained ministry?</i>	103
<i>Q.3 Which image best captures your view of formation?</i>	104
<i>Q.4 What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?</i>	108
<i>Q.5 Which other words or images would you use to describe your experience of formation for ordination?</i>	113

Part III: Discussion

Chapter 6: Understanding Formation	116
Formation is Difficult to Define	116
Formation as Enculturation	118
<i>Formation and Critical Education</i>	118
Transformative Learning Theory	121
<i>The Importance of Convictional Experiences</i>	123
<i>The Importance of Reflection on Experience</i>	124
<i>Formation or Transformation?</i>	125
<i>The Process of Formation</i>	127
<i>Formation is Life-Changing</i>	128
A Critique of Transformative Learning Theory	130
<i>Formation through Relationship with God</i>	132
<i>Formation through Engagement with Theology</i>	133
<i>Formation into the Likeness of Christ</i>	134
Conclusion	138
 Chapter 7: Experiencing Formation	 139
Formation is Challenging and Painful	139
Biblical Metaphors used to describe the Experience of Formation	144
The Locus of Formation	151
Enjoyment and Engagement	157
Noticeably Formative Experiences	159
Concluding Comments	162

Chapter 8: Formation for Ordained Ministry	164
The Ordained Ministry as a Distinctive Ministry	164
<i>Priests as Leaders</i>	166
<i>Priests are Set Apart</i>	167
<i>Priests are Commissioned for Service</i>	168
<i>Priests are Set Apart not Set Above</i>	169
The Representative Nature of Priesthood	171
<i>The Call to Holiness</i>	172
<i>Reconciling the Functional and Ontological Aspects of Priesthood</i>	173
Priests as Servants	174
Priests as Shepherds	175
Priests as Enablers	176
The Tasks of Ordained Ministry	177
<i>Different Expectations of Priests</i>	179
<i>Priests as Imitators of Christ</i>	180
Concluding Comments	181
 Conclusion	 183
Training for Ordination to the Priesthood in the Church of England	183
Defining Formation	184
Implications for the Church of England	187
Areas for Further Study	191
 Appendices	 193
Appendix A: The Questionnaire	193
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form	196
Appendix C: Questions for the Semi-Structured Interviews	198
Appendix D: Post-Interview Review Form	200
 Bibliography	 201

Illustrations

Tag Cloud:

What words would you use to describe your understanding of formation? 99

Charts

1: Which image best captures your view of formation?	105
2: Which image best captures your view of formation? according to gender	106
3: Which image best captures your view of formation? according to year group	107
4: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?	108
5: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation? according to gender	109
6: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation? according to age	110
7: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation? according to year group	111
8: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation? according to staff	112

Abbreviations

ABM	Advisory Board of Ministry
ACCM	Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry
ACCUPA	Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas
AKC	Associate of King's College
ATR	Anglican Theological Review
BJTE	British Journal of Theological Education
CACTM	Central Advisory Council of Training for the Ministry
CHP	Church House Publishing
CIO	Church Information Office
CME	Continuing Ministerial Education
CTE	Committee for Theological Education
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DLT	Darton, Longman & Todd
EPPET	Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology
GME	General Ministerial Examination
GOE	General Ordination Examination
IME	Initial Ministerial Education
JATE	Journal of Adult Theological Education
LNSM	Local Non-Stipendiary Minister
OLM	Ordained Local Ministry
OPM	Ordained Pioneer Ministry
OUP	Oxford University Press
POT	Post Ordination Training
REP	Religious Education Press
RTP	Regional Training Partnership
SCRTP	South Central Regional Training Partnership
STETS	Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
UPA	Urban Priority Area
URC	United Reformed Church
WCC	World Council of Churches
WJKP	Westminster John Knox Press

Statement of Copyright

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Introduction

Since being ordained to the priesthood in the Church of England in 1997, I have been a parish priest and at various times a training incumbent, an adult ministerial theological educator, and a Diocesan Director of Ordinands (responsible for the discernment of vocations to ordained ministry, pastoral care of those in training, and the arrangement of Title Posts: the first appointment after ordination). As I have reflected on these experiences in ordained ministry, I have sought to inform that reflection through reading about theological education in general and training for ordained ministry within the Church of England more specifically.

Over the years I have observed that the word ‘formation’ has increasingly appeared in official Church of England publications, to the point where in 2003 what has become known as ‘the Hind report’ was actually entitled *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*.¹ The language of formation has also become widely used within the literature of ministerial theological education. Yet formation is rarely defined: for instance, David Kelsey observed of a research seminar focussing on the place of character formation in theological education that there was no explicit discussion of the concept of formation.² The first aim of this thesis, therefore, is to provide a working definition of formation in the context of training for ordination in the Church of England for further discussion. To this end Part I describes the broader context within which this study is situated by: surveying Anglican understandings of ordained ministry (chapter 1); providing a historical overview of training for ordination within the Church of England (chapter 2); and tracing the development in usage of the language of formation within official Church of England documentation (chapter 3).

Within the literature about theological education there is much discussion about formation both in the Christian life and for ordained ministry. The vast majority of that literature is written from the perspective of theological educators, many of whom have experienced formation through ministerial theological education

¹ Archbishops’ Council, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*, GS 1496 (London: CHP, 2003).

² David Kelsey, ‘Reflections on a Discussion of Theological Education as Character Formation’, *Theological Education* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1988), 64.

themselves. It is noticeable, however, that few of those who write about formation for ordained ministry refer to their own experience of formation. What is more, there is a significant gap in the literature: few ministerial theological educators mention asking ordinands to reflect on their experience of formation during training for ordination.³ The second aim of this thesis, therefore, is to introduce the perspectives of ordinands in training into the discussion about formation for ordained ministry.

The empirical data for this critical conversation were gathered by means of a case study investigating how ordinands on one part-time ministerial training course both understood and experienced formation during their initial ministerial education and the first few years after ordination. The part-time training course chosen for the case study began to use the language of formation in the 1980s.⁴ Through explicit mention of formation in the course documentation, and during the induction process, ordinands training on this part-time course were well aware of the language of formation. When agreeing to participate in this research they were also encouraged to engage in further reflection on their own formation.

When I initially began casually asking people what they understood by the word ‘formation,’ instead of giving me definitions or explanations of how ‘formation’ contrasted with other nouns used in similar contexts, such as ‘education’ or ‘training’, they offered me images, similes and metaphors. These initial responses included potter and clay, refining fire, being stripped down and rebuilt, and pebbles on a beach being worn smooth by each other and the waves. Some of these metaphors can be found amongst the panoply of biblical metaphors and imagery, whilst others were new creations. Speaking ‘about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another,’⁵ metaphors are powerful ways of communicating in new and creative ways. Always containing the whisper ‘it is, *and it is not*,’⁶ metaphors are like lenses focussing on particular perspectives. They enable people to speak in their own terms about their own experience, describing it in ways that make sense to them. The recognition that people instinctively resort to metaphorical rather

³ Those who do are Steven Croft & Roger Walton, *Learning for Ministry* (London: CHP, 2005), 77 and Virginia Samuel Cetuk, *What to Expect in Seminary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 115-120.

⁴ STETS staff discussion, 19 Feb 2011.

⁵ Janet Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 15.

⁶ Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 13.

than conceptual language when speaking about formation led to the decision to elicit metaphors, both biblical and personal, from participants in the empirical study.

Part II of the thesis describes the research method and findings of this empirical study: chapter 4 outlines the methodology of critical conversation, provides information about the course, discusses the use of metaphors, and describes in detail the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods employed in the empirical study; chapter 5 analyses the results of the quantitative element of the research: a self-completion questionnaire.

Discussion about formation from the perspective of theological educators tends to concentrate on the act of formation with consideration of the shape and content of the academic curriculum. Formation may also, however, be the result of implicit learning, occurring without the conscious intent of either the theological educator or the person being formed, and here social, cultural and contextual influences are potentially very significant factors in formation. Apart from one notable American study by Foster *et al.*,⁷ theological educators have paid little attention to influences such as the culture of the institution, the manner of delivery of the academic curriculum, and members of staff as role models. In the interviews conducted as the qualitative element of the current research, participants were encouraged to consider anything that could have contributed towards their formation for ordained ministry whether it was part of the curriculum provided by the training institution, absorbed from the culture of that institution, or unconnected with their training but seen to be formative because of the different perspective gained while training for ordination.

Historically, the Church of England has emphasized the importance of living in community whilst training for ordination, and indeed during the majority of the twentieth century such training was concentrated in residential colleges. These intentional communities usually adhere to a particular theological tradition. Such institutions, with their structured corporate life and worship, encourage enculturation alongside the academic study of theology. Since the 1970s, however, increasing numbers of ordinands have trained on part-time courses, which gather together

⁷ Charles Foster, L.E. Dahill, L.A. Golemon & B.W. Tolentino, *Educating Clergy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

students and staff representing a wide range of theological traditions, and have a reduced residential component. Courses are intentional communities but students remain within their home community and hence belong to multiple communities simultaneously during training. The participants in this empirical study were training for ordination on one part-time course, meeting in small groups for theological study with a tutor each week during term-time and gathering for residential weekends every six weeks and a week-long residential once a year. The significance of each of these different communities for formation is one of the factors investigated in this study.

Each institution seeking to train people for ordained ministry in the Church of England at the time of the empirical study⁸ was required to produce documentation for the Churches' Validation Framework. In this documentation the institution answered questions about its understanding of the Church's mission and the main characteristics of the ordained ministry for which the institution sought to prepare its candidates.⁹ This requirement reflected the many social changes which have impacted the role and work of Anglican priests during the last century, along with the rise of professionalism in ministry.¹⁰ As the ministry for which ordinands are being formed is perceived to have changed, so the process of explicit formation has changed too. The model of ministerial education in the majority of training institutions over the last century has changed from one of socialization into an order of priests, to one whereby individuals are encouraged to become reflective practitioners¹¹ in order to enable them to adapt to constantly changing contexts and to become life-long learners. The fostering of reflective practitioners has been accompanied by an increasing emphasis on placements and training in practical skills, with the introduction of Clinical Pastoral Education.¹²

⁸ April 2009 – September 2011.

⁹ Archbishops' Council, *Mission and Ministry* (London: CHP, 1999), 51.

¹⁰ See Martyn Percy, *Clergy: The Origin of Species* (London: Continuum, 2006), R. Cox, *Priesthood in a New Millennium* (New York: Church Publishing, 2004), and Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London: SPCK, 1984).

¹¹ Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).

¹² John Paver, *Theological Reflection and Education for Ministry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

Since 2000 there has been a move among ministerial educators within the Church of England to reassert the importance of both being and doing, and to seek a better balance between academic theology, personal formation, and reflective practice.¹³ The part-time training course chosen for the case study had these three primary and interrelated aims: to educate, to train and to form. This course was one of the first to describe its objectives in terms of knowing, doing and being.¹⁴ One of the striking aspects of the *Course Handbook* was the emphasis on the provision of an integrated theological education, training, and formation at each level of study. This was then built on incrementally through a spiral design, so that regular and recurrent attention was paid to the three core elements, producing opportunities for the development and integration of learning.¹⁵ The empirical study records the extent to which those training on the course reported experiencing that integration.

Whereas discussions about theological education in the Church of England have tended to refer to the three strands of academic theology (knowing), personal formation (being) and reflective practice (doing), Roman Catholic documents refer to four related areas of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.¹⁶ The Church of England website, Call Waiting, aimed at attracting younger vocations, similarly acknowledges four elements. It separates ‘formal education, such as learning about theology and the Bible’ from formation, stating that ‘formation as a minister’ involves growth in faith in Christ, a deepening personal relationship with God, the acquisition of skills, and self-awareness.¹⁷ In order to discern whether it is possible to differentiate these related regions of formation in practice, participants were asked in interview to identify how they had been formed in each of the four areas of education, spiritual growth, developing character, and learning skills for professional ministry.

Part III of the thesis considers the combined findings of the quantitative and qualitative research methods: chapter 6 discusses the participants’ understanding of

¹³ Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions* (London: DLT, 1999, 2008); Percy, *Clergy*; Archbishops’ Council, *Formation for Ministry*.

¹⁴ STETS, *Course Prospectus*, 2002.

¹⁵ STETS, *Course Handbook 2008-2009*, 36-37.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis: On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2006).

¹⁷ <http://www.callwaiting.org.uk/training/> (31 December 2015).

formation in conversation with educational theories, and chapter 7 describes the participants' experiences of formation during their training for ordination.

The Churches' Validation Framework allowed for the wide variety of theological perspectives on priesthood held within the Church of England. These range from a more Catholic ontological view to a more Protestant functional one. They can be illustrated by the reflective spiritual perspective on being a priest articulated by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, in 1972,¹⁸ on the one hand, and the numerous tasks of the priest described by the then Bishop of Oxford, John Pritchard, in 2007, on the other.¹⁹ Since Ramsey's time, the balance of churchmanship within the Church of England has shifted with an increasing proportion of those offering themselves for ordained ministry coming from the evangelical wing of the Church. Since 2010 there have been numerous publications by both academics and clergy reflecting on their experiences in ministry attesting to a renewed interest in understanding the ordained ministry. The current research adds to this a perspective on how some of those in training understand the priesthood into which they are to be ordained, with chapter 8's discussion of the ordinands' understanding of priesthood in conversation with the literature.

The conclusion offers a definition of formation in the context of training for ordination to the priesthood in the Church of England for further discussion, it considers the implications of these research findings for ordination training within the Church of England, and identifies some areas for further study.

¹⁸ Michael Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today* (London: SPCK, 1972).

¹⁹ John Pritchard, *The Life and Work of a Priest* (London: SPCK, 2007).

Part I: Formation for Ordained Ministry in the Church of England

Chapter 1: Anglican Understandings of Ordained Ministry

The Sources

It has been said that if you want to know what Anglicans believe, look at their liturgy: ‘Anglican faith is learned and lived through practice and example more than in theory. *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi, Lex Vivendi*: As we Worship, So we Believe, So we Live.’¹ When it comes to considering the way in which Anglicans think about ministry, then the liturgy of ordination, the Ordinal (and its rubrics), provides crucial evidence because it ‘sets out a Church’s understanding of its ordained ministry both in its doctrine and its practice, as well as actually providing forms of prayer, and of commissioning and welcome, for the candidates being ordained on any specific occasion.’²

The historical development of the Ordinal during and since the Reformation reveals the different perspectives on ordained ministry within the Church of England. It also demonstrates how Anglican understandings of ministry have developed within a context, whether that is religious and political turbulence, or ecumenical dialogue. During the last forty years it has been ecumenical reports that have provided most insight into an Anglican understanding of ministry: both the World Council of Churches’ report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and sections of the *Final Report* of the First Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission concerning Ministry and Ordination have been received with approval by the General Synod of the Church of England.³

Important as the Ordinal is to an Anglican doctrine of ministry, however, it is not the only source. Many Anglicans would argue for the primacy, or even supremacy, of the witness of scripture in any theological debate. In considering an Anglican

¹ Martyn Percy, *Thirty Nine New Articles: An Anglican Landscape of Faith* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2013), xii.

² Colin Buchanan, *Ordination Rites in Common Worship* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2006), 3.

³ World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982); Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report* (London: 1982).

perspective on priesthood, Jones argues that scripture is the source looked at most closely along with the first five centuries of the Church, ‘because it is in this period that the hallmark identity and mission of the church are formed.’⁴ The Board for Mission and Unity report, *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry*, begins with a detailed examination of scripture and exploration of its interpretation over the centuries. It also considers relevant contemporary issues and ecumenical debates. Such official reports demonstrate that scripture, tradition, reason, and experience comprise the Anglican way. As the report explains, in studying the original witness of scripture and the Church’s ongoing interpretation through the ages, Anglicans use ‘the God-given and God-directed gift of reason,’ where ‘reason’ is understood as ‘the continuing reflection upon Scripture and Tradition in the light of contemporary experience.’⁵

Underlying these practices and examples of Anglican thinking are the claims expressed in Canon Law. Canon A5 ‘Of the Doctrine of the Church of England’ explicitly refers to scripture, early Church tradition, and liturgy:

The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.⁶

Any Anglican understanding of ministry, therefore, must derive from scripture, the teachings of the early Church, the definitive statements of the Church of England produced at the time of the Elizabethan Settlement of the English Reformation, and the Ordinal. By ‘the Ordinal’ was originally meant the ‘The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons’ of 1662. In 2005 the General Synod of the Church of England approved the Common Worship Ordination Services, including ‘The Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters’ as modern alternatives. Common Worship replaced the Alternative Service Book of

⁴ Greg Jones, ‘On the Priesthood’, *ATR* 91, no. 1 (2009), 50.

⁵ General Synod of the Church of England, *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* (London: Board for Mission and Unity, 1986), 15; cf. Stephen Spencer, *Anglicanism* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 4-5; Stephen Sykes, John Booty & Jonathan Knight (eds.), *The Study of Anglicanism* (London: SPCK, 1998), 87-128.

⁶ The Canons can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/canons-7th-edition.aspx> (31 December 2015).

1980 and its ordinal retains ‘a great deal of material’ from its predecessor.⁷ What these ordinals teach about an Anglican understanding of ministry will be considered further below.

According to Canon Law every person who is to be ordained priest or deacon in the Church of England has to make the Declaration of Assent before the ordaining bishop. In doing so, each ordinand declares their belief ‘in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness.’ The Declaration of Assent is also made by every ordained person every time they are licensed to a new post.⁸ In theory, therefore, every ordained minister in the Church of England understands their ministry with reference to these sources. In practice, however, they do not usually encounter the Declaration of Assent, the Oath of Allegiance to the crown, and the Oath of Obedience to the diocesan bishop until towards the end of training for ordination, or even on the pre-ordination retreat. It cannot be expected, therefore, that this is how the participants in the empirical study, who were in training for ordination, instinctively understood their ministry.

The foundational statement about ordained ministry in the Church of England can be found in both Canon C1 ‘Of holy orders in the Church of England’ and the Preface to the Ordinal in *The Book of Common Prayer*: ‘The Church of England holds and teaches that from the apostles’ time there have been these orders in Christ’s Church: bishops, priests, and deacons.’⁹ In asserting this, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (the principal author of *The Book of Common Prayer*) was not claiming that the three orders of ministry were instituted by Christ, or that they can be traced back to scripture, or that the apostles were the first bishops. Cranmer was claiming that the three orders existed at the time of the apostles and that they derive from the earliest writings of the Church.¹⁰ Hugh Melinsky describes the process whereby the Christian ministries described in the New Testament epistles hardened into offices as having ‘the consistency of advanced aircraft design, that of variable geometry, which

⁷ Archbishops’ Council, *Common Worship: Ordination Services* (London: CHP, 2007), 9.

⁸ Canon C15.

⁹ *Ordination Services*, 79.

¹⁰ Edward P. Echlin, *The Story of Anglican Ministry* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1974), 83; cf. Henry Chadwick, ‘Tradition, Fathers and Councils’ in Sykes, Booty & Knight (eds.), *The Study of Anglicanism*, 105-106.

enables an aeroplane to change its shape in flight according to the particular demands being made on it.¹¹ The same could be said of the development of an Anglican theology of ministry which has been moulded by political pressures and religious circumstances.

The Use of Scripture

In theory an Anglican understanding of ministry should be grounded in the scriptures. However, there are different approaches to the interpretation of scripture and individual interpreters will prefer to emphasize the importance of some parts of scripture over others for theological and other reasons. It is also difficult to move from the descriptions of ministry contained within scripture to prescriptions for church order and ministry today. In practice, understandings of Christian ministry tend to be derived from interpretations of the New Testament. In the case of *The Book of Common Prayer*, the use of New Testament language and imagery to the exclusion of Old Testament references was most probably due to Cranmer's intention to differentiate his ordinal from that of the Roman rite (specifically the Sarum rite) which preceded it. Cranmer thus omitted any comparison of priests to the sons of Aaron, the levitical priesthood, and all of the cultic references. In doing so he eliminated almost all of the medieval additions that had signified the power of the priest to offer sacrifices.¹²

The readings from scripture specified for use in *The Book of Common Prayer* Ordering of Priests are Ephesians 4:7-13, followed by either Matthew 9:36-38 or John 10:1-16.¹³ The choice of readings, and the fact that only these three are included in the rite, places certain constraints on an Anglican understanding of ministry. The passage from Ephesians mentions that Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers 'for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ' until all come into the fullness of Christ. The passage from Matthew's Gospel reports that Christ was moved with compassion because the people were like sheep without a shepherd. Hearers are then

¹¹ M.A.H. Melinsky, *The Ministry of the People of God* (London: CHP, 1975), 2.

¹² Echlin, *The Story of Anglican Ministry*, 54.

¹³ *Ordination Services*, 92-93.

urged to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send labourers. In the passage from John's Gospel, Jesus declares that he is the good shepherd who has come 'that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,' whilst he himself lays down his life for the sheep. Two things that can be inferred from this choice of passages are that ordained ministry is for the purpose of building up the ministry of all God's people, and that the metaphor of shepherding is significant to the role of the priest. There is no indication of how priests might be understood in relation to the variety of ministers mentioned in Ephesians 4.

Common Worship allows for a much wider range of passages from scripture to be used in The Ordination of Priests, including even the readings of the day especially on a Principal Feast or a Festival. This does not leave the choice as wide open as might be supposed, however, because Canon C3 'Of the ordination of priests and deacons' states:

Ordination to the office of priest or deacon shall take place upon the Sundays immediately following the Ember Weeks, or upon St Peter's Day, Michaelmas Day or St Thomas's Day, or upon a day within the week immediately following St Peter's Day, Michaelmas Day or St Thomas's Day, or upon such other day, being a Sunday, a Holy Day or one of the Ember Days, as the bishop of the diocese on urgent occasion shall appoint.¹⁴

The notes accompanying the Common Worship Ordinal suggest readings from the Old Testament prophets, Psalms, New Testament epistles, and the Gospels. The notes also state that at least one of the readings should be read by a layperson.¹⁵ The standard rubrics for a service of Holy Communion apply. These specify that 'Either one or two readings from Scripture precede the Gospel reading' and that 'The Psalm or Cantic follows the first reading.' All three of the readings from *The Book of Common Prayer* are included as options but the passages both from Ephesians and Matthew are extended. In the case of Matthew 9:35-10:16 this includes further information about Jesus' own ministry of teaching and healing, and his calling of the twelve disciples sending them out to the lost sheep of Israel with the advice to be 'wise as serpents and innocent as doves.'

¹⁴ Canon C3.

¹⁵ *Ordination Services*, 49.

The passages from the prophets welcome the messenger who brings good news (Is. 52:7-10), declare one is anointed to care for the suffering and those who mourn (Is. 61:1-3), and announce a new covenant written on the hearts of the people (Jer. 31:31-34). The Psalms proclaim that the LORD is king and mention that Moses and Aaron were among his priests (Ps. 99), urge ‘his ministers that do his will’ to bless the LORD (Pss. 103:17-end; 118:19-26), ask for help in order to live in accordance with the law of the LORD (Ps. 119:33-40), and declare the intention to praise and proclaim the attributes and activities of the LORD (Ps. 145:1-7, 22). The passages from the epistles speak about a ministry of reconciliation and being ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-6:2); guidance to a young church leader on teaching, training himself in godliness, and setting an example to the believers (1 Tim. 4:6-16); and the blameless character expected of elders and bishops (Tit. 1:5-9). The gospel passages comprise the Great Commission to make disciples, baptizing and teaching them (Matt. 28:16-20), and Jesus’ post-resurrection gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples with the promise ‘If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’ (John 20:19-23).

The wider range of readings from scripture allowed in the Common Worship Ordinal reintroduces some of the interpretations of ordained ministry that Cranmer deliberately avoided, such as the reference to Old Testament priests in Psalm 99:6. The other emphases are proclaiming the gospel, teaching, pastoral care, personal holiness, worship, reconciliation, being an ambassador and a role model, making disciples and baptizing them, and forgiving and retaining sins.

The Office of Priesthood

The readings from scripture are followed in *The Book of Common Prayer Ordinal* with a lengthy exhortation addressed to the candidates by the bishop. This emphasizes the importance of the office to which they are called: that is, ‘to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family; to seek for Christ’s sheep.’¹⁶ The same core content is found in The Declarations in the Common Worship Ordinal. However, it

¹⁶ *Ordination Services*, 94.

is preceded there by the statement that ‘Priests are called to be servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent. With their Bishop and fellow ministers, they are to proclaim the word of the Lord and to watch for the signs of God’s new creation.’¹⁷ The description of priests as ‘servants’ is far more prevalent in the modern ordinal (occurring ten times) than in *The Book of Common Prayer*, where it only appears four times. The reminder that priests are to work with their Bishop and fellow ministers reiterates a sense of the collegial and collaborative character of ministry that is also missing from the earlier ordinal. The Common Worship Ordinal then adds a reference to priests calling hearers to repentance and declaring ‘in Christ’s name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins.’

In *The Book of Common Prayer* the vast majority of the Bishop’s exhortation to the candidates is reminding them of the great importance of the office to which they are called, warning them against being a stumbling block to the sheep of Christ, and asserting that they cannot carry the weight of this office in their own strength. Candidates are urged to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit and to study the scriptures daily for guidance so that they might become ‘wholesome and godly examples and patterns for the people to follow.’¹⁸ These obligations to be diligent in daily prayer and study and to set an appropriate example to the ‘flock of Christ’ are also set down in Canon C26 ‘Of the manner of life of clerks in Holy Orders.’ A similar reminder of the weight of the calling and exhortation to pray occurs in the Common Worship Ordinal after the examination of the candidates and before the singing of the *Veni Creator*. Meanwhile, the Declarations in Common Worship have a second paragraph outlining the duties of a priest. This introduces two new elements: first that priests are to work with all God’s people, discerning and fostering their gifts; and second that priests are to preside at the Lord’s table, and offer a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.¹⁹ In *The Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal there is no specific mention of the role of the priest at the Eucharist.

Webster argues that Anglicanism has been pushed into defining ordained ministry in terms of particular functions rather than the possession of special powers because of

¹⁷ *Ordination Services*, 37.

¹⁸ *Ordination Services*, 95.

¹⁹ *Ordination Services*, 37.

a renewed emphasis on the Christian entering ministry at baptism rather than ordination.²⁰ In some official Church reports there has indeed been a recognition that Christians enter ministry at baptism.²¹ However, baptism is entry into a heritage, expressing identity in Christ and beginning a new way of life: walking in the light of Christ. This is not an authorization and a commissioning into a particular role. As the Pastoral Introduction to the rite in Common Worship states: ‘Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God’s love.’²² The Commission then reminds those who are baptized that they ‘are called to worship and serve God.’ That includes proclaiming ‘by word and example the good news of God in Christ’ and seeking and serving ‘Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself.’²³ These are aspects of discipleship, and confusion is caused when ‘ministry’ is used to denote ‘the service to which the whole people of God is called.’²⁴ Even so, Anglicanism has not been pushed into defining ordained ministry in terms of functions because of the ministry of all the baptized. On the contrary, since the Reformation Anglicanism has avoided defining ordained ministry in terms of special powers in order to distinguish it from the medieval emphasis on cultic practices.

Canon Law provides a list of duties rather than functions for those priests who have ‘a cure of souls.’²⁵ Many of these duties, such as administering the sacraments and instructing parishioners, are mentioned in the ordinals. Others, such as consulting with the Parochial Church Council, are not. These duties do not define ordained ministry for Anglicans, they are a list of legal responsibilities for any priest exercising ordained ministry in the particular context of having a cure of souls.

²⁰ John Webster, ‘Ministry and Priesthood’, in Sykes, Booty & Knight (eds.), *The Study of Anglicanism*, 329.

²¹ General Synod of the Church of England, *The Theology of Ordination* (London: General Synod, 1976), 17; House of Bishops, *Eucharistic Presidency* (London: CHP, 1997), 25.

²² Archbishops’ Council, *Common Worship: Christian Initiation* (London: CHP, 2006), 62.

²³ *Common Worship: Christian Initiation*, 73.

²⁴ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 21; cf. Robert Paterson, ‘It’s just a Comma!’, in *The Reader* 111, no. 1 (Spring 2014), 18.

²⁵ Canon C24.

Candidates are Called and Examined

Both the Preface to *The Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal and Canon Law specify that candidates for ordination must be ‘first called, tried and examined’ and known to have the required qualities. It was always presumed that the candidate felt an inner vocation from God but, as Bradshaw points out, the word ‘called’ in this context meant ‘the outward mandate of the Church.’ As the Preface of the 1550 Ordinal stated, no-one ‘by his own authority’ might presume to execute the functions of ordained ministry. That Preface prescribes that candidates should be ‘of virtuous conversation and without crime’ and ‘learned in the Latin tongue and sufficiently instructed in holy Scripture.’²⁶ Latin is no longer a requirement for ordination, although according to Canon Law candidates should still be ‘sufficiently instructed in Holy Scripture and in the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England, as set forth in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal’ and anything else that the bishop deems necessary.²⁷ In my experience as a Diocesan Director of Ordinands, most of those who are ordained are unfamiliar with the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and the Ordinal, which leads me to question whether they have received specific instruction on them during their initial training for ordination.

Both *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Common Worship ordinals pose questions to the candidates in the examination. These questions refer to accepting ‘the Holy Scriptures as revealing all things necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ,’ teaching from the scriptures, ministering ‘the doctrine and sacraments of Christ as the Church of England has received them,’ being diligent in prayer and study, being an example to the flock of Christ, and obeying the bishop. *The Book of Common Prayer* also has a question about encouraging ‘quietness, peace, and love’ amongst those committed to their charge, and another about the discipline of Christ, banishing and driving away ‘all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God’s word’ and using ‘both publick and private monitions and exhortations,’²⁸ whereas Common Worship simply asks about striving ‘to be an

²⁶ Paul F. Bradshaw, ‘Ordinals’, in Sykes, Booty & Knight (eds.), *The Study of Anglicanism*, 156.

²⁷ Canon C4, Canon C7.

²⁸ *Ordination Services*, 95-96.

instrument of God's peace.' It also asks the candidates about leading Christ's people in proclaiming the gospel and working with 'your fellow servants.'²⁹

In the historical context within which *The Book of Common Prayer* Ordinal was written, the questions posed in the examination were polemical. The lack of any reference to consecration, sacrifice or mediation signified a break from the Sarum rite. The emphasis on the Church of England's understanding of doctrine and the sacraments, and that nothing should be taught that could not be proved in scripture, further attacked the sacrificial understanding of Christian priesthood.³⁰ In the examination the Common Worship ordinal has retained the same position.

Ministers of both Word and Sacrament

Following the Ordination Prayer, the bishop and priests lay hands on the head of each candidate and pray. In *The Book of Common Prayer* the bishop says 'Receive the Holy Ghost,'³¹ and in Common Worship the bishop says 'Send down the Holy Spirit.'³² In the first case it seems that the bishop is addressing the candidate and in the second case God. Echlin argues that Cranmer's choice of words was a reflection of his theology of the Eucharist, which was receptionist.³³ In both liturgies, the bishop invokes the Holy Spirit on the candidate 'for the office and work of a priest.' In *The Book of Common Prayer* this is followed with the phrase 'in the Church of God' and in Common Worship with 'in your Church' thus implying the Church universal rather than merely the Church of England. In *The Book of Common Prayer* the bishop continues by quoting John 20:23, then saying 'And be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and of his holy Sacraments.'³⁴ This sentence, whilst emphasizing that the priest is a minister of both word and sacrament, was another significant change from the Sarum rite in which the bishop said 'Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Mass, both for the living and the dead.' Here again it becomes apparent that Cranmer was teaching and signifying a

²⁹ *Ordination Services*, 38.

³⁰ Echlin, *Anglican Ministry*, 93.

³¹ *Ordination Services*, 99.

³² *Ordination Services*, 43.

³³ Echlin, *Anglican Ministry*, 77; cf. Stephen Neill, *Anglicanism* (London: Mowbray, 1977), 72-80.

³⁴ *Ordination Services*, 99.

different, reformed concept of priesthood.³⁵

In both *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Common Worship ordinals the newly ordained priest is given a Bible. The words accompanying that action indicate that it is the sign of a God-given authority to preach the gospel and minister the holy sacraments.³⁶ In earlier ordinals, including the one produced by Cranmer in 1550, a chalice and paten were also given to those ordained priest. Due to pressure from protestant reformers this was removed in the Ordinal of 1552.³⁷

In that historical context it is notable that Cranmer's ordinal of 1662 was exceptional among the churches of the Reformation in retaining the word 'priest' for an ordained minister.³⁸ In contrast, Common Worship has employed the word 'presbyter' in the name of the service, in the introduction to the service when the bishop speaks about priests ministering 'with the Bishop and their fellow presbyters,' and in the Litany where one of the petitions is 'for all bishops, presbyters and deacons.' The rubrics also include the guidance that 'Priests share with the bishop in laying hands on the heads of those ordained to the presbyterate,' and, after the Peace, 'the newly ordained presbyters may be presented with the bread and the wine that are to be used in the Liturgy of the Eucharist which immediately follows,' and, during the Sending Out, 'The bishop may lead the newly ordained presbyters through the church.' This change in terminology from priest to presbyter is due to a return to the transliteration (rather than translation) of the biblical term *presbuteros*. According to the Commentary on the Common Worship Ordination Services, this change is due to the influence of ecumenical dialogue.³⁹

Priestly Character

Canon Law states that the character of order is permanent:

No person who has been admitted to the order of bishop, priest, or deacon can ever be divested of the character of his order, but a minister

³⁵ Echlin, *Anglican Ministry*, 97.

³⁶ *Ordination Services*, 99, 44.

³⁷ Echlin, *Anglican Ministry*, 107; cf. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 460-461.

³⁸ Paul F. Bradshaw, *Rites of Ordination: Their History and Theology* (London: SPCK, 2014), 163.

³⁹ *Ordination Services*, 122.

may either by legal process voluntarily relinquish the exercise of his orders and use himself as a layman, or may by legal and canonical process be deprived of the exercise of his orders or deposed therefrom.⁴⁰

The term ‘character’ has been used by the Church to denote ministerial distinctiveness. The ordained minister is considered to be distinct in receiving a special call, taking on a special responsibility, and being given in ordination a special grace for strength.⁴¹ By ‘character’ of an order is understood the mark or seal given by God, as in baptism.⁴² That seal is considered to be indelible, thus the Church of England might be understood to be proclaiming an ontological view of ordination. However, character is also functional in the sense that it is dynamic: it imparts a capacity and aptitude to perform certain acts, and a stimulus to actively pursue an ideal.⁴³ Once a person has been ordained, they remain so, even though they may cease to exercise that particular ministry. Indeed, the license to exercise ministry in a particular context such as a parish or chaplaincy is usually for a limited period of time. (According to Canon Law a minister cannot exercise ordained ministry at all without a license from a bishop.⁴⁴) Nevertheless, ordination into a particular order is never repeated in recognition of ‘the God-given charism of ministry.’⁴⁵ At ordination a minister is set in a special relationship to the Church as a whole, and this is a permanent relationship.⁴⁶ From my initial conversations with ordinands, I suspected that many of them would struggle with the idea of being set apart by virtue of their ordination, hence the phrasing of the last interview question in the empirical study.⁴⁷

It is important to note that the impersonal character of ordination is a gift from God, and distinct from the personal character of the individual being ordained. This distinction means that the ministry of word and sacrament can be guaranteed as valid

⁴⁰ Canon C1.2.

⁴¹ *The Theology of Ordination*, 11.

⁴² *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 2.

⁴³ cf. Avery Dulles, *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 12; John Macquarrie, ‘Priestly Character’, in Robert E. Terwilliger & Urban T. Holmes (eds.), *To be a Priest: Perspectives on Vocation and Ordination* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 147-153; Dermot Power, *A Spiritual Theology of the Priesthood* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 80-84.

⁴⁴ Canon C8.

⁴⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 31-32.

⁴⁶ *The Theology of Ordination*, 12.

⁴⁷ Cf. p.164.

despite the personal unworthiness of the minister.⁴⁸ This does not mean that the personal character of the minister is irrelevant. On the contrary, Canon Law and the ordinals specify what is expected of ministers in terms of lifestyle: anyone admitted to holy orders should be ‘of virtuous conversation and good repute and such as to be a wholesome example and pattern to the flock of Christ;’⁴⁹ and the Presentation in the Common Worship ordinal asks whether ‘those whose duty it is to know these ordinands and examine them found them to be of godly life and sound learning?’⁵⁰ As John Macquarrie points out, ‘Effectual priesthood demands not just the *doing* of the priestly act but *being* a priest in union with the great high priest, Jesus Christ.’⁵¹ Perhaps it would be helpful to see ordination as both God’s gift and human response, like in baptism, with a deposit or first instalment of the grace of God for ordained ministry, with the hope and expectation that the candidate would continue growing into the fullness of Christ.⁵²

The Church of England’s Understanding of Ordained Ministry

The Study Edition of Common Worship: Ordination Services includes an Introduction by the House of Bishops which sets out the Church of England’s understanding of ordained ministry.⁵³ This begins by stating that the ministry of the Church is the ministry of Christ and that the ordained ministry is Christ’s gift to his Church. It then asserts that ‘Holy Orders shape the Church around Christ’s incarnation and work of redemption, handed on in the apostolic charge.’ This bold statement is not expounded or justified in any way. By making such a statement the House of Bishops might be understood to be proclaiming a functional view of ordination, especially considering that this is followed by a distinction between the respective foci of the ministry of deacons, priests and bishops. This differentiation between the orders in the ordinal is relatively recent, having developed since the *Alternative Service Book* of 1980. According to the House of Bishops, the ministry

⁴⁸ *The Theology of Ordination*, 11; cf. Article 26 ‘Of the Unworthiness of Ministers,’ <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/articles-of-religion.aspx> (31 December 2015).

⁴⁹ Canon C4.1.

⁵⁰ *Ordination Services*, 33.

⁵¹ Macquarrie, ‘Priestly Character’, 149.

⁵² *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 2-3.

⁵³ *Ordination Services*, 4-5.

of priests is focused ‘in calling the Church to enter into Christ’s self-offering to the Father, drawing God’s people into a life transformed and sanctified.’⁵⁴ This terminology, so redolent of the Eucharist, is unpacked in the introduction to the Common Worship service ‘Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters,’ which includes these words:

Priests are ordained to lead God’s people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel. They share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church, delighting in its beauty and rejoicing in its well-being. They are to set the example of the Good Shepherd always before them as the pattern of their calling. With the Bishop and their fellow presbyters, they are to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of word and sacrament, that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God.⁵⁵

This might be described as a statement of purpose rather than a description of functions or list of duties. It places emphasis on the priest’s role as leader of the people and collaborator with the bishop and fellow presbyters (but noticeably not deacons). It points to the Good Shepherd as the role model, and identifies word and sacrament as comprising the ministry of the priest. It declares that the purpose of ordained ministry is to enable the growth of all Christians.

The House of Bishops’ Introduction states that the ordained ministry is apostolic, catholic, holy, and one, with Christ’s mission being ‘the fundamental and unifying reality.’⁵⁶ By ‘apostolic’ is meant that the ordained ministry is sent to enable the whole Church to fulfil its vocation to mission. By ‘catholic’ is meant that ordination in the Church of England is ordination into the whole Church. By ‘holy’ is meant that the ordained person is set apart for a particular calling. By ‘one’ is meant that the ordained ministry articulates and serves the unity of the Church. The emphasis on these four marks of the Church being expressed in the ordained ministry echoes the perspective of the House of Bishops’ report *Eucharistic Presidency*.⁵⁷

The concept of ordained ministry being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic is not one that I would have expected to be expressed by the participants in the empirical study,

⁵⁴ *Ordination Services*, 4.

⁵⁵ *Ordination Services*, 32.

⁵⁶ *Ordination Services*, 5.

⁵⁷ *Eucharistic Presidency*, 30-33.

although they would be familiar with this fourfold designation of the Church from their study of ecclesiology. The House of Bishops' understanding of ordained ministry seems far removed from the practice and example of it that ordinands would have encountered. Furthermore, such an understanding is not explicitly articulated anywhere in the liturgy. I would, however, expect participants to echo the perspective and language of the introduction to the Common Worship service 'Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters' quoted above, not least because some of it derives from scripture. The ordinands' understanding of priesthood is discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Meanwhile, the next chapter continues to describe the broader context within which this study is situated by providing a brief historical overview of training for ordination within the Church of England.

Chapter 2: A Brief History of Ordination Training in the Church of England

There have been numerous changes in training for ordination in the Church of England since 1800. This chapter traces the development of different types of training institutions providing theological education and different patterns of training; the creation of central Church structures responsible for financing and overseeing training; changes in the content of the curriculum and the adoption of adult education methods in its delivery; and the increasing diversity of candidates.

Oxbridge Graduates

In 1800 nearly all ordained men were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. The universities were confessional establishments: there were minimal religious and ecclesiastical qualifications for all students, along with some extra-curricular lectures in Divinity. Most fellows at Oxford and Cambridge were ordained, and some were engaged in serious theological work. If a man married, then he had to vacate his fellowship and might move to a college living, so becoming a parish priest.¹

Graduates needed to show knowledge of the Gospels in Greek, the Thirty-Nine Articles and Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. As Chapman observes, 'On this model of theological study, the system of thought on which it was based was fixed and final, and did not allow for even a limited degree of critical study.'² Given that the syllabus was compulsory and the content limited, it is not surprising that it was not always taken seriously.

The Establishment of Theological Colleges

During the nineteenth century, society and the opportunities to train for ordination changed radically. In 1843 Cambridge established a short postgraduate course in

¹ F.W.B. Bullock, *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England in England and Wales from 1800 to 1874* (St Leonards-on-the-sea: Budd & Gillatt, 1955), 27.

² Mark D. Chapman, (ed.), *Ambassadors of Christ: Commemorating 150 Years of Theological Education in Cuddesdon 1854-2004* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 3.

Divinity with the 'Voluntary Theological Examination.' This flourished because many bishops required its certificate before accepting men for ordination.³ In 1870 an Honours School of Theology was established at Oxford. Three years later Cambridge introduced the Theology Tripos and the postgraduate course was abolished. A contributing factor to these developments was the Universities Tests Act 1871 which freed all university appointments and degrees from clerical or other ecclesiastical qualifications, except for those concerned with divinity studies.⁴ This growing trend towards the secularisation of the universities was one of the reasons for the development of theological colleges. Other motives were the desire to keep up with the professions, and the enthusiasm of the different theological traditions for establishing their own training institutions.

Melinsky suggests a different motive for the establishment of theological colleges: fear of the incursions of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who were set up in 1835 to examine the scandalous state of cathedral finances. According to Melinsky, the Commissioners' power to prepare schemes for the redistribution of finances led to the sudden appearances of colleges in cathedral closes. Cuddesdon, established in 1854, was different in that it was ten miles out of Oxford and opposite the bishop's palace.⁵

The theological colleges deliberately created an atmosphere of holiness and withdrawal. Cuddesdon, for instance, under the influence of the Oxford movement, consciously adopted high spiritual ideals and independence from the world. For H. P. Liddon, the first Vice-Principal, the work of a theological college was to mould character as well as to teach truth.⁶ Chapman comments, 'Knowledge was not a matter of assimilation of facts, but instead was the cultivation of a distinct form of wisdom required for the discernment of the voice of God.'⁷ For Liddon, education in

³ F.W.B. Bullock, *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England in England and Wales from 1875 to 1974* (London: Home Words, 1976), xv.

⁴ Bullock, *1875–1974*, xvi.

⁵ M.A.H. Melinsky, *The Shape of the Ministry* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1992), 253.

⁶ ACCM, *Residence: An Education* (London: ACCM, 1990), 71.

⁷ Chapman, *Ambassadors*, 7.

a theological college was ‘first and foremost education in a disposition of the heart.’⁸ To this end, the formative experience of the ‘common life’ was seen as vital.⁹

By 1874 there were ten theological colleges arising from private enterprise: some founded by bishops gathering candidates around them and others by advocates of particular theological traditions. There was no central control or co-ordination: each college had only a small staff, who were compelled to design their own syllabus, and each bishop set his own deacon’s examination (although they were broadly similar). In some diocesan colleges, such as Lichfield, most of the men would be candidates for ordination in that diocese, so their preparation could be adapted to the local requirements. The majority of students, however, did not know in which diocese they would serve their Title so the introduction of the Preliminary Theological Examination in 1874 was a welcome development. It was recognised by 50% of the bishops. According to Bullock, the desire expressed by the leaders of *all* schools of thought was to ‘improve the education of clergy and make the work of ministry more efficient, intellectually and spiritually.’ One aspect of this was learning to oppose the growing atheism and increasing rationalistic propaganda of the times.¹⁰

In 1874 the small number of graduate ordinands who attended a theological college only did so for a term or two. Others went to live with a clergyman for a few months before ordination, reading the subjects required for their bishop’s examination and gaining experience of parish work. The most famous of these were Vaughan’s ‘Doves,’ clergy trained by Dr C. J. Vaughan.¹¹ Some stayed at university or went home to parents until they reached the age of twenty-three whereupon they could be ordained deacon. Residence at a university and obtaining a degree were still regarded by the majority as adequate training for ordination.¹²

Whether at a theological college or in small groups gathered around a single teacher, the emphasis of the curriculum was basic theology, Bible study, especially New

⁸ Chapman, 8.

⁹ *Residence*, 79.

¹⁰ Bullock, *1800–1874*, 144–147.

¹¹ Archbishops’ Commission on Training for the Ministry, *Training for the Ministry: Final Report of the Archbishops’ Commission as presented to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, February 1944* (London: Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1944), 35.

¹² Bullock, *1800–1874*, 147.

Testament Greek, and parochial chores such as preaching, visiting, school management, and the deepening of spiritual life through regular common worship. The impact of the teacher's personality and example was often a deeper and longer lasting influence than the formal studies.¹³

Theological Colleges for Non-Graduates

English society changed radically during the nineteenth century. Historically the main source of ordination candidates had been the upper and upper middle classes, gentry, and the professions but towards the end of the nineteenth century these groups were finding new opportunities elsewhere. At the same time there was improved schooling and adult education for men from the lower and lower middle classes, who were often intellectually able and possessed a social conscience but for whom a university education was out of reach for financial reasons. Urban populations were growing rapidly but were starved of pastoral care because the existing parochial system did not provide for them. The role of the parish priest was changing too: no longer so influential in the local community his energies were increasingly concentrated within the parish church.¹⁴

Dowland recounts the provision of 'redbrick' theological colleges for non-graduates from the growing urban areas and industrial life. He argues that an important innovation of which these colleges were a part was a growth in formal and vocational training.¹⁵ Among the colleges he studied was King's College, London which from the 1850s had been encouraging graduates from Oxford and Cambridge to join the theology department to develop professional skills. King's also offered a diploma of Associate of King's College (AKC) to non-graduates who completed three years of systematic, general academic studies. The college was committed to older men who could not afford to go to university and in 1876 its council approved a three year course of evening classes for those who wanted to enter Holy Orders but were unable to give up the work by which they supported themselves.¹⁶

¹³ Bullock, *1875-1974*, xxiii.

¹⁴ Bullock, *1875-1974*, xvii-xviii.

¹⁵ David A. Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training: The Redbrick Challenge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 5.

¹⁶ Dowland, *Nineteenth-Century Anglican Theological Training*, 49-50.

According to Dowland, King's seems to have placed particular weight on academic development. Nevertheless, that was combined with pastoral training – in contrast to the traditional view that academic and pastoral formation should be kept separate. King's programme included practice in reading liturgy, work on the composition and delivery of sermons (with a concern to ensure the preaching of orthodox doctrine), and opportunities to gain experience in parochial visiting, running schools, and congregational singing. Stress was placed on pastoral studies. From its earliest days the college sought to build a structure of disciplined life to encourage character development. That structure combined lectures with daily and Sunday prayers. There were rules governing conduct, and demanding punctual attendance at lectures, prayers and communal meals. The personal lives of students were reviewed in frequent interviews with the Principal. The main difficulty King's faced was in providing residential accommodation nearby.¹⁷

A different approach was taken by Father Herbert Kelly of the Society of the Sacred Mission, which began theological training in the 1890s. Kelly advocated fundamental changes in training for all ordinands. He had the notion of creating a missionary brotherhood, including not only clergy but laymen. He wanted to use the military virtues of order, discipline and loyalty. Kelly's ideas and personality influenced the organization and curriculum at Kelham. His intense concern to deliver thoroughly trained soldiers for Christ was reflected in the whole programme of study which, as devised in 1914, lasted seven or eight years. The college put much emphasis on moulding the characters of the students.¹⁸

Ordinands were taken away from the distractions of urban life to a house in the country where, in the rhythm of community life, they could cultivate the desired qualities. As Dowland observes, 'They were to learn desired qualities not only through mastering abstract principles but through having to deal with each other and by the organization of their lives about the daily round of worship.'¹⁹ Men were required to do the domestic chores themselves. Prayer was central to their life, including formal services in chapel. This was combined with manual work. The

¹⁷ Dowland, 52-53.

¹⁸ Dowland, 114-116.

¹⁹ Dowland, 117.

intermingling of labour with worship in chapel was intended to convey the theological insight that worship and the rest of life were not separate but formed a whole, witnessing to the catholicity of God. Kelly aimed for the highest possible intellectual achievements and there were rigorous standards of selection and continual testing. The students, who often came from poorer backgrounds, had to agree to pay back the costs of their training after ordination.²⁰

The nineteenth-century colleges did not have to worry as much about central Church structures as they did about individual bishops. According to Dowland, ‘Many bishops objected to the challenge offered by the colleges to the conventional means of clerical formation. They subjected novel colleges to unsympathetic comparisons to ancient universities.’ Many bishops were especially wary of those who trained at Kelham. ‘The most prominent allegation was that college training was narrow, especially in comparison to that of Oxford and Cambridge.’²¹

Dowland suggests that the bishops’ view of clerical formation ‘involved fitting ordinands for a role in which they were “socialized” at the universities as gentlemen with only general intellectual interests.’²² During the eighteenth century such socialization had enabled clergy to mix with people in other leading walks of life. In contrast to this, the work of non-graduate colleges meant preparing men from a newly developing social group with the practical skills of a more ‘occupationally professional’ role. This required a higher command of academic theology, including pastoral expertise, although Dowland suggests that the shift should perhaps be seen more as a change of emphasis than as an entirely new departure of the nineteenth century.²³

Chapman reflects that

where German and American theological curricula were highly structured and often resembled other forms of ‘professional’ education, the character of Anglican theological education was more usually described in terms of the assimilation of an ethos, the ownership of a

²⁰ Dowland, 119-123; cf. Alistair Mason, *History of the Society of the Sacred Mission* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1993).

²¹ Dowland, 175-177.

²² Dowland, 204; cf. Robert Reiss, *The Testing of Vocation* (London: CHP, 2013), 33.

²³ Dowland, 205.

tradition and the development of a way of life or a pattern of being, rather than being primarily focused on the education of the ‘clerical practitioner.’²⁴

Whilst true of colleges like Cuddesdon, this was not true of all theological colleges during the nineteenth century: many of the newer colleges were less focussed on ethos and tradition and more concerned with educating professional clergy.

The ‘redbrick’ theological colleges of the nineteenth century attempted to provide a theological education for the emerging middle-class non-university men. In doing so they might have been expected to devise an educational programme tailored to the needs of non-graduates yet it seems that the colleges sometimes uncritically copied a university model. Many colleges also tried to transform the behaviour of their pupils into something approximating to ‘gentlemen.’²⁵

A National Standard

In 1884 all of the bishops except for two agreed to make their deacon’s examination conform roughly to the pattern of the Preliminary Theological Examination, which became the standard ‘passing-out’ examination of the colleges. From 1893 any non-graduate had to pass the new Central Entrance Examination before entering the final two years of training at college. The examination tested knowledge of Latin and Greek (through set books), and general education through papers on British history, elementary logic and some preliminary Bible study.²⁶

Bishop Gore initiated a debate about the graduate status of ordinands in the upper house of the province of Canterbury in 1906.²⁷ Two years later *The Supply and Training of Candidates for Holy Orders* stated that the universities did not provide training for ordained ministry and proposed that ‘a full and specific course of professional training should, as a rule, be deemed essential for all those who are to be admitted to Holy Orders.’²⁸ The report assumed that the normal process of

²⁴ Chapman, 1.

²⁵ Dowland, 207-208.

²⁶ Reiss, *Testing*, 43.

²⁷ Reiss, 45.

²⁸ Archbishops’ Committee on the Supply and Training of Candidates for Holy Orders, *The Supply*

education for priesthood was an efficient secondary school education, a course of higher education at a university or elsewhere, and ‘a period of special training.’ It proposed a requirement of three years higher education followed by two years professional training for all ordinands.²⁹ Discussion of the report resulted in Resolution 6 of the Lambeth Conference of 1908: ‘candidates for Holy Orders should normally be graduates of some recognised university.’³⁰ This requirement has not been implemented, despite being debated throughout the twentieth century. The other major issue discussed in the report was the decline in numbers coming forward for ordination. This was thought to be largely due to the financial cost of training. Resolution 5 of the Lambeth Conference, therefore, urged that ‘an ordination candidates fund and committee’ should make grants available to men to train for the ministry.³¹

The Establishment of a Central Council

Following on from that Lambeth Conference, in 1912 the Central Advisory Council on Training for the Ministry (CACTM) was established in England with these functions:

1. to watch the supply of candidates for Holy Orders and their sources;
2. to consider the best methods of training and testing candidates;
3. to draw up, and from time to time revise the list of theological colleges, the recognition of which by the bishops the Council advises;
4. to provide for the inspection of existing theological colleges; and to advise as to the formation and supply of new theological colleges;
5. to generally promote unity of action between all those concerned in the training of candidates for Holy Orders, and to collect information and make suggestions for the guidance of the bishops.³²

The Council’s work was soon disrupted by the outbreak of the First World War which drastically reduced the number of those training for ordination. In Advent

and Training of Candidates for Holy Orders (London: SPCK, 1908), 18.

²⁹ *Supply and Training*, 34.

³⁰ <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1908/> (31 December 2015).

³¹ <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1908/> (31 December 2015).

³² Bullock, *1875-1974*, 56; Reiss, 56-57.

1916 the archbishops wrote to all soldiers challenging them to ‘pass with courage from the venture of War to the venture, at home and across the sea, of winning men to the Kingdom of Christ.’³³ The letter was a radical new departure in welcoming men from all backgrounds and making the educational requirements far more flexible. An Ordination Test School was established in a former prison at Knutsford to prepare returning servicemen for the Oxford Local Examinations, which allowed entrance to the universities. Candidates usually stayed at Knutsford for six to nine months during which their suitability for ministry was tested through observation by the staff, under the principal F. R. Barry.³⁴

Reiss reports that in October 1919 it became apparent there were men who had been rejected by Knutsford subsequently being accepted at theological colleges. This led to the constitution of a Central Candidates Committee. All candidates applying to be accepted for ordination training had to be registered with the Committee and bishops and principals of theological colleges were asked to refer to the register before accepting a candidate for training.³⁵ It is unclear to what extent all parties adhered to the new policy.

The General Ordination Examination

The Service Candidates’ Examination replaced the Universities Preliminary Examination in October 1919. Two years later it was called the General Ordination Examination (GOE). Papers consisted of Christian Doctrine (two papers), Old Testament (two papers), New Testament (two papers), Church History (one paper), Christian Worship (one paper), and Christian Morals (one paper). Biblical papers included set books, New Testament ones in Greek *or* Latin, and ‘easy passages from other parts of the New Testament’ in the other language. Both Greek and Latin were required from all except service candidates. In addition there was an entirely optional Hebrew paper. Pastoral subjects were taught in theological colleges but not examined in the GOE.³⁶ Certain examinations were officially recognised as

³³ Reiss, 85.

³⁴ Reiss, 90; cf. Richard Vernon Higgins Burne, *Knutsford: The story of the Ordination Test School 1914-40* (London: SPCK, 1960).

³⁵ Reiss, 109-110.

³⁶ Bullock, *1875-1974*, 61-62.

equivalent to the GOE. These included ones from Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and the AKC. Deacons were still expected to pass further diocesan examinations before ordination to priesthood. Men over 30 were not usually expected to take the GOE.³⁷

Resolution 64 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference regarded ‘a competent knowledge of the Bible, of Christian worship, history, theology and morals, and pastoral work, together with training in the devotional life, as of first importance.’ Instruction in reading and preaching was to be added to this and, without wanting to overload the curriculum of the theological colleges, students ‘should be given such elementary instruction in psychology, the art of teaching, social economics and other studies bearing upon their life work as will encourage them to maintain their interest in these subjects after ordination.’³⁸

The requirement of being able to read the New Testament in Greek was thought very important and should only be dispensed with in exceptional requirements, such as older men whose education had been interrupted. The Commission on Staffing of Parishes suggested that the decline in the number of ordination candidates was due to the secularization of the time, difficulties in the formularies of the faith, and misunderstandings about the life and work of the clergy, hence it proposed that assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles should no longer be required as part of the doctrinal test necessary for admission to Holy Orders.³⁹

Central Funding for Ordination Training

Historically men had been financed through ordination training by themselves, or their families, or a charity. After the First World War those returning from war who offered themselves for ministry were funded centrally. Through a Sponsor Appeal in 1927 individual donors provided grants for poor students anonymously. The Durham Report of 1944 recommended the selection of candidates by regional committees and that no candidate received a grant until he had been accepted. After the Second

³⁷ Bullock, *1875-1974*, 87.

³⁸ <http://www.conference.org/resolutions/1930/> (31 December 2015).

³⁹ Church Assembly, *Report of the Commission on Staffing of Parishes* CA 334 (London: SPCK, 1930), 69.

World War a large number of men offered themselves for ministry and financial support was provided by the central Church, as has been the case ever since.

Increased Emphasis on Theological Interpretation

In 1944 all those under 20 were expected to take a degree and all under 30 were encouraged to take a degree. Honours graduates in Theology spent a further two years and other graduates three years in a theological college at a university. Non-graduates were not normally accepted for training before the age of 21. They spent four years in training, at least the first two at theological college in a university town. There were no general rules for those over 30. All candidates under 25 had to study Greek and Latin and all candidates should produce evidence of some experience of social work under responsible supervision. Post-ordination training was for three years and there was no additional examination during the diaconate. The GOE increased the eight Bible papers to nine, added a paper to test capacity for teaching scripture, modified the Church History papers and removed the one on Christian Morals.⁴⁰

These academic requirements were beyond many men who had no paper qualifications, hence the development of pre-theological colleges such as Brasted Place in Kent which opened in 1952. This offered a two-year course for men up to the age of 30 without paper qualifications to enable them to enter theological college. Similarly the Bernard Gilpin Society in Durham offered a one-year course prior to entering theological college from 1957.⁴¹

CACTM published a report in 1949 outlining how the GOE syllabus should lay the foundations of 'real theological knowledge and understanding.' The examination on Holy Scripture, for instance, demanded knowledge of the text itself, knowledge of the historical and critical issues bearing on the interpretation of scripture, and the ability to expound theologically 'its permanent spiritual meaning.'⁴² The first aim in theological training, according to the report, must be to help the ordinand

⁴⁰ Archbishops' Commission, *Training for the Ministry*, 74-77.

⁴¹ Bullock, *1875-1974*, 144.

⁴² CACTM, *The Purpose and Scope of Clergy Training* (London: CACTM, 1949), 14-15.

see more clearly what the Christian Gospel really means for himself and for mankind; to encourage him to face honestly both problems which it raises for his mind, and the demands that it makes upon his will; and to prevent his falling into the error of treating Christian theology as a mere system of propositions about God.⁴³

This perspective gained ground rapidly: writing in 1958, F. R. Barry noted that pre-war theological teaching was aimed at keeping men ‘sound in orthodoxy.’ He argued that rather than information gleaned from textbooks, ordinands needed theologically trained minds:

The theology with which we are concerned is an attitude rather than a ‘subject.’ To whatever extent it can claim to be an exact science – not vague and undisciplined speculation – its *datum* is the self-revelation of God, in the Bible, in Jesus Christ himself and in the facts of Christian experience – which are ‘facts’ as much as those of the physical universe. And the study of this material must involve critical and historical research with all the resources and apparatus of learning. But what it is in itself is not simply that. It is the interpretation of the world and of the nature and destiny of man in the light of Christian revelation.⁴⁴

Barry wanted ordinands to gain knowledge about the world, life and thought in contemporary society, and the development of doctrine within its own historical context. Ordinands needed to be able to interpret the world theologically and to be apologists. He wrote, ‘Let theology, then, be taught by the universities, and let the colleges deal with vocational training which they can give and nobody else can give for them.’⁴⁵

Assistant Ministry and the Development of Courses

In a chapter entitled ‘A supplementary ministry,’ Barry considered what he called ‘voluntary clergy.’ They would be recognised Christian leaders in both the local church and public life. They would be non-stipendiary, earning their own living and receiving only expenses from the parish church. They would assist the full-time minister or ‘minister to small flocks that have no shepherd in such ways and on such occasions as are practicable.’⁴⁶ He argued that this would not be a radical departure

⁴³ *Purpose and Scope*, 12.

⁴⁴ F. R. Barry, *Vocation and Ministry* (Welwyn: J. Nisbet, 1958), 116-117.

⁴⁵ Barry, *Vocation*, 118-121.

⁴⁶ Barry, 154.

from the tradition but rather a return to primitive practice, as argued by Roland Allen in 1930.⁴⁷ Barry suggested that the Church needed to find a way to train ‘voluntary clergy’ which would not involve sending them away to college.

This began in 1960 with the establishment of the innovative Southwark Ordination Course by Bishop Mervyn Stockwood and suffragan John Robinson. The main practical reason for the development of this course for men over 30 was acknowledgement of the harm done to married men’s families by uprooting them to a residential setting. It was hoped that the new pattern based on weeknight classes, residential weekends and a residential summer school each year for three years would not only keep families more united but would earth theology in the realities of the working world.⁴⁸ Men training on the course could gain the London extra-mural Diploma in Biblical and Religious Studies.⁴⁹

In 1966 CACTM became the Advisory Council for the Church’s Ministry (ACCM) and two years later a working party produced the report *A Supporting Ministry* which declared that there were ‘no theological objections to Auxiliary Priests.’⁵⁰ A year later age limits were set: no one should commence training for this ministry until he was at least 30; the upper age limit was 50. Training should last not less than three years and there should be at least 21 residential weekends over the three years with a summer school of at least two weeks per annum.⁵¹ Men for this ministry should be trained thoroughly according to the GOE syllabus but ‘the approach should not be over-academic.’⁵²

At that time the GOE consisted of seven papers on Holy Scripture including New Testament Greek, two on Christian Doctrine, two on Church History, Christian Worship, Christian Ethics, optional papers on Latin text including Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, and Elementary Hebrew.⁵³ The GOE became the General Ministerial Examination (GME) from 1978 when it became the standard for

⁴⁷ Roland Allen, *The Case for Voluntary Clergy* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1930).

⁴⁸ Melinsky, *Shape*, 253.

⁴⁹ Bullock, *1875-1974*, 143.

⁵⁰ ACCM, *A Supporting Ministry* (London: CIO, 1968).

⁵¹ Reiss, 231.

⁵² Bullock, *1875-1974*, 130.

⁵³ ACCM, *Theological Training* (London: ACCM, 1966), 7.

deaconesses and lay workers as well as ordinands. The same year a formal assessment in Pastoral Studies was introduced.⁵⁴

The experimental Southwark Ordination Course was followed by the establishment of the North West Ordination Course in 1970 centred on Manchester Cathedral. Both courses trained non-stipendiary and stipendiary candidates side by side. Other parts of the country soon developed their own arrangements, and by 1971 eighty men were training on courses.⁵⁵ All courses had residential weekends and a week residential school therefore they were actually part-residential rather than non-residential. Ordinands either gathered one evening a week for lectures or met in small groups with a local tutor to work through distance learning materials.

Published in 1968, *Theological Colleges for Tomorrow* was the report of a working party (under the chairmanship of Bernard de Bunsen) appointed to enquire into the problems caused by the decline in the number of ordinands. It recommended that colleges should be in or near a university with a theology faculty, and actively linked with it, thus echoing proposals from the Durham Report of 1944. This was not only because of the greater theological resources but also because of the greater possibilities for 'entering into dialogue with lively minds on the perennial issues and the issues of the day.'⁵⁶ The report concluded that the optimum size of a theological college, for both financial and educational viability, should be 120 ordinands, with 80 being the absolute minimum.⁵⁷ This was based on the staff to student ratio of 1:10 and a minimum staff of five: a principal, two lecturers on the Bible, a theologian and a church historian.⁵⁸ For various reasons, including the fact that most of the colleges were independent institutions, this recommendation was not implemented. It was, however, reiterated twenty-five years later in *Theological Training: A Way Ahead*.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Reiss, 266, 274.

⁵⁵ Bullock, *1875-1974*, 131.

⁵⁶ ABM, *Theological Colleges for Tomorrow* (London: CIO, 1968), 43.

⁵⁷ *Theological Colleges*, 71-72.

⁵⁸ *Theological Colleges*, 49-50.

⁵⁹ Steering Group for Theological Courses and The Advisory Group on Full-Time Theological Training, *Theological Training: A Way Ahead* (London: CHP, 1992).

An Integrated Approach to Theological Education

Melinsky reports that around 1970 there were protests about the content of ordination training which resulted in practical placements being allotted more time. He makes a distinction between the old 'academic' approach and the new 'integrated' approach to ministerial education. The first implies specialization in isolated subjects, suspicion of new forms of knowledge, a long gestation, and strong control over the process. It produces 'the minister as *persona*, inheriting traditional patterns of ministry which gave more importance to intellect and words than emotions.' The second concentrates on the task of the minister, with the skills of the adult educator being valued more highly than academic scholarship. Parish priests are increasingly seen as comprehensively trained practitioners and communicators: men aware of the relevant theory, ready to work with other professionals, and showing prophetic impatience with the ills of society and church.⁶⁰

In 1977 the two-year part-time Aston Training Scheme was founded in place of the residential pre-theological colleges. Students on Aston continued in employment and studied a distance learning course (usually an Open University Foundation course in the Arts or Social Sciences). They attended four residential weekends a year, an Open University Summer School, and a Summer Week provided by the scheme itself. The scheme developed a method of continuous assessment and self-assessment. Each student had a local Pastoral Tutor with whom they were expected to meet on a monthly basis for a two-hour in depth conversation.⁶¹ The educational aims of Aston were 'to promote a dialogical mode of education' and 'to help students integrate learning by an action-reflection-action process,' whilst also giving them self-confidence in studying, and fostering self-understanding.⁶² Aston deliberately adopted the methods of adult education in which students were 'invited to become creative participants in their own development and in the task of

⁶⁰ Melinsky, 255-256.

⁶¹ Norman Todd, *A Thing Called Aston: An Experiment in Reflective Learning* (London: CHP, 1987), 40-41.

⁶² Todd, *A Thing Called Aston*, 58.

understanding and changing the world,' as John Hull recommended for all adult Christian learners.⁶³

The Decline in Residence

By 1979 all courses were validated for training both stipendiary and non-stipendiary candidates and by 1989 there were equal numbers of colleges and courses (14 each). Meanwhile, both the profile of ordinands and the patterns of training were changing. Between 1960 and the late 1970s the proportion of married ordinands in residential training doubled.⁶⁴ The number of women in training (for licensed ministry) was steadily rising. The element of residence, which had been emphasized in the establishment of the theological colleges of the nineteenth century, diminished through the twentieth century. Even amongst ordinands training in colleges, there were increasing proportions of both married and single candidates living in accommodation away from college.

William Jacob notes that the development of part-time training created an impression that the traditional emphasis on withdrawal into an isolated common life was not essential to ministerial formation. However, he argues that experience of part-time training suggests that residence might still be 'a powerful force for managing ministerial formation.' It is not the fact of being in residence alone that forms people for ministry, but the opportunity to be part of 'a community of learning.' Jacob lists five areas in which this context of learning could be an important component in training for ordination: informal discussion between students and staff; learning to live and work with people perceived as different potentially leading to ordinands gaining insight into themselves; exploring spirituality both individually and corporately; experiencing being the Church, sharing a common life in Christ; and having time and space to reflect on the role of being a minister of the Church and the implications of that for personal and family life.⁶⁵

⁶³ John Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 237.

⁶⁴ Mark Hodge, *Patterns of Ministerial Training in the Theological Colleges and Courses* (London: ACCM, 1985), 8.

⁶⁵ William Jacob, 'An Integrating Theology in Theological Education' in D.W. Hardy & P.H. Sedgwick (eds.), *The Weight of Glory* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 190-192.

During the 1980s many complained that the theology offered by the courses was of a lower standard. However, Melinsky's experience over eleven years with the Northern Ordination Course led him to conclude that 'a rigorous study of formal theology, even to the point of writing a long essay in each subject, is possible and useful for a wide variety of students, and the teaching of it amid the hurly-burly of family life, secular job and church engagement added a dimension of reality to the undertaking.'⁶⁶

Ordained Local Ministry Schemes

1980 saw another new development from the Diocese of Southwark – an Ordained Local Ministry Scheme (OLM). This was soon followed by schemes in Lincoln, Manchester and Truro dioceses. Much of the training on these schemes took place in the candidate's home parish – the creation of a neighbourhood profile, work on pastoral care, the development of a mission statement, preaching, leading worship – all were designed to prepare the ordinand for the task of being a priest in that particular place. The over-riding emphasis was on reflective practice, thus the OLM schemes adopted the educational methods of the Aston Training Scheme.

Based on his experience of the Southwark OLM scheme, Godfrey identifies three features which he argues differentiate OLM training from other ordination training: collaborative working; experiential theological learning; and wholeness in the curriculum. Collaboration is expected to happen through the ordinand working in the context of a ministry team in the parish before, during, and after training; and in peer groups. It is the former element which is an innovation of OLM schemes: in residential colleges and on part-time courses ordinands work in peer groups. The educational method of experiential theological learning is based on Kolb's cycle of learning⁶⁷ with placements providing concrete experiences on which to reflectively observe. After completion of the placement, ordinands 'draw out gospel values' before applying the insight gained from the placement to their parish setting.⁶⁸ Reflection on experience has become increasingly important in ministerial education

⁶⁶ Melinsky, 259-260.

⁶⁷ David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1984).

⁶⁸ Nigel Godfrey, 'Training Ordained Local Ministers' in Malcolm Torry & Jeffrey Heskins (eds.), *Ordained Local Ministry* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2006), 132-140.

in recent decades. However, questions must be asked about whether ordinands have sufficient theological resources for significant theological reflection on experience.

Godfrey provides the example of a module on the Hebrew Scriptures to illustrate what he means by wholeness in the curriculum: a peer group chooses a passage from the eighth century prophets and members undertake an exegesis together. As individuals they apply the passage to their own context. As a peer group they visit each other's churches on a Sunday and explore the relationship of what they observe with worship practices in the Hebrew Scriptures. Finally, individuals reflect on their observations and suggest practices that might be adopted in their own setting. They share these with their ministry team. Godfrey argues that this involves ordinands learning to work together and exercise skills of observation, as well as interpreting historical texts and applying them to present contexts.⁶⁹ This example seems unnecessarily complicated and raises questions about the appropriate integration of textual study with reflective practice in ministerial training. It would also appear that this module begins in a different place in the learning cycle: with theological resources rather than with concrete experience.

Torry also argues that a major innovation of the Southwark OLM scheme is the educational method: 'It is *fairly* true to say that most training for ordained ministry follows the academic model: that is, theory is studied and then applied in practice.'⁷⁰ The Southwark scheme gathered once a week for modules on traditional academic subjects like New Testament but sessions were designed around practice. Torry gives the example of Christian Doctrine, which he taught, using practical exercises: scouring the Scriptures for connections and meanings, developing techniques to grasp the meaning of ancient doctrinal texts, using role-plays to explore the use and development of doctrinal ideas in evangelistic and pastoral settings, and holding informal debates to hone apologetic skills.⁷¹ This example could be described as an inductive bottom-up approach to ministerial education, in contrast to the traditional academic model of transmitting knowledge top-down from tutor to student.

⁶⁹ Godfrey, 'Training Ordained Local Ministers', 139.

⁷⁰ Malcolm Torry & Jeffrey Heskins (eds.), *Ordained Local Ministry* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2006), 7.

⁷¹ Torry, *OLM*, 7.

The principal of the Lichfield OLM scheme, Elizabeth Jordan, states that training on that scheme emphasized the relational nature of priesthood rather than the call for the individual to become Christlike. Following Greenwood,⁷² she suggests that imitation of Christ characteristically emphasizes *kenosis*, self-denial, and being crucified with Christ; whereas an emphasis on participation in the life of the Trinity will focus on the relational ontology of the priest: a priest by virtue of the relationship with others, not because of separation from them.⁷³ However, the distinction between being Christlike and being relational is somewhat artificial because Jesus was not separate from others, he was intensely relational, and the New Testament has a corporate notion of being in Christ, being part of the body of Christ. Being Christlike entails being in relationship with both God and with people.

All ordinands in training are in relationship with several different groups of people including parishioners, staff, and their peers. Historically, relationships within the residential college might have been considered the most important ones, whereas Jordan argues that ‘rather than suggesting that the patterns of life adopted during training, or with other ordinands, are foundational for future ministry, training within the Lichfield Diocesan OLM Scheme encouraged reflection upon and attention to relationships within the congregation.’⁷⁴ While reflection on relationships within the congregation is important, conversations with peers away from the congregation are equally important in preparation for ordained ministry.

Some bishops and dioceses have refused to countenance OLM, arguing that priests are ordained into the whole Church of God, not to serve in one parish forever. As with the introduction of the part-time courses, concern has also been expressed as to the standard of theology offered during training.

⁷² Robin Greenwood, *Transforming Priesthood: A New Theology of Mission and Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1995).

⁷³ Elizabeth Jordan, ‘OLM: Ministry in Relationship’ in Andrew Bowden, Leslie J. Francis, Elizabeth Jordan & Oliver Simon (eds.), *Ordained Local Ministry in the Church of England* (London: Continuum, 2011), 109.

⁷⁴ Jordan, ‘OLM’, 109.

In 1987, *Education for the Church's Ministry*, ACCM Occasional Paper 22 – usually referred to as ACCM 22 – introduced some major changes in ordination training. The three reasons for the report were that the GME syllabus was not explicit about the qualities most desirable in a minister, the syllabus and assessment procedures were largely academic, and the increasingly overcrowded programme modelled an unhealthy pattern for the exercise of ministry. ACCM 22 proposed abandoning the GME and devolving responsibility to the colleges and courses for the training they provided. In seeking to address its concerns the report posed three fundamental questions for those providing theological education: 'What ordained ministry does the Church of England require?', 'What is the shape of the educational programme best suited for equipping people to exercise this ministry?', and 'What are the appropriate means for assessing suitability for the exercise of this ministry?' Colleges and courses had to submit their proposals to the Committee for Theological Education (CTE) as the validating body and these would be subject to review every five years. The majority of ACCM 22 provided some outline responses to the three questions.⁷⁵

In 1991 the Advisory Board for Ministry (ABM) replaced ACCM. The following year *Theological Training: A Way Ahead*, known as the Lincoln report, acknowledged that 'the overriding concern has been the need of the Church of England for training and ministerial formation which is theologically appropriate, educationally effective, adequately resourced and affordable.'⁷⁶ The context of the report was that there were too many residential places at colleges, ever increasing costs of full-time training, and important new possibilities in education and training which the Church should take seriously. Among the 34 recommendations in the report was a proposal for a national network of eight regional courses. Following the priorities of ACCM 22, initial training should be inter-disciplinary with scope for the integration of theology and practice; it should be delivered in a way that enshrines collaborative values; and it should provide appropriate preparation for ordained

⁷⁵ ACCM, *Education for the Church's Ministry* (London: ACCM, 1987).

⁷⁶ *Theological Training: A Way Ahead*, i.

ministers to serve the mission of God in the light of the world-wide ecumenical context.⁷⁷

The report proposed that the absolute minimum size for a theological college not in federation with others was 60 ordinands, with the aim being 100-120 ordinands. All institutions were expected to train women alongside men ‘in an integrated manner.’ A trust fund should be established for potential theological educators. The number of colleges was to be reduced and it was proposed that recognition for the training of ordination candidates should be withdrawn from Mirfield, Oak Hill, and Salisbury and Wells.⁷⁸ *A Way Ahead* was debated in General Synod in November 1992, the day after Synod had voted to approve the legislation for the ordination of women to the priesthood, and Synod declined even to ‘take note’ of it.

The House of Bishops then appointed an ‘assessment group’ under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Hereford to produce a new report. *Theological Colleges: the Next Steps* recommended that full-time theological training in the Church of England should be based at eight centres: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Leeds / Mirfield, London, Nottingham / Lincoln, and Oxford. Existing theological colleges were encouraged to work closely with one another and with other agencies offering theological training. The House of Bishops then withdrew recognition for training for candidates for ordination from Salisbury and Wells Theological College and Chichester Theological College with effect from July 1994.⁷⁹ This was the first report to mention programmes of ‘mixed-mode ministerial training and formation,’ albeit only in passing.⁸⁰

Mixed-Mode Training

In 1995 the House of Bishops approved mixed-mode training for five schemes including St John’s Nottingham and the Peterborough MA in Contextual Theology through the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course. Mixed-mode training

⁷⁷ *A Way Ahead*, 10.

⁷⁸ *A Way Ahead*, 86.

⁷⁹ Assessment Group on Theological Colleges, *Theological Colleges: The Next Steps*, (London: CHP, 1993).

⁸⁰ *Theological Colleges: The Next Steps*, 10.

involved elements of withdrawal into residence for delivery of the academic programme but for the majority of the time during training the ordinand was based in parochial ministry. With the subsequent development of Ordained Pioneer Ministers (OPM) in the Church of England, mixed-mode training has evolved in different ways. St Mellitus College in London, for instance, offers ‘full-time church based training.’ Ordinands are based in ministry under supervision, attending lectures at the college one day a week and residential weekends and an annual residential week as on a traditional course. The aim is to enable better integration of academic theology with ministerial practice through actively fostering theological reflection on contemporary experience.

In 1999 the Archbishops’ Council came into being and ABM became Ministry Division. By the end of the twentieth century, there was a threefold national provision of training for ordination: residential theological colleges, regional courses and OLM schemes. Colleges were aimed at those under 30 years of age who were training for stipendiary ministry. Courses were for those over 30 and consisted of three years of training. OLM schemes were for those non-stipendiary, or self-supporting, ministers who would be locally deployed, usually in their home parish. They were over 30 and usually much older.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century there were 11 theological colleges training candidates for ordination. Two were Anglo-Catholic: St Stephen’s House, Oxford, and the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield. Six were broadly evangelical: Oak Hill in London; Ridley Hall, Cambridge; Cranmer Hall, Durham; St John’s, Nottingham; Trinity College, Bristol; and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. Three were more central: Queen’s College, Birmingham; Ripon College, Cuddesdon; and Westcott House, Cambridge. There were 12 part-time courses and 18 dioceses with candidates training on OLM schemes.⁸¹

⁸¹ Reiss, 278-279.

Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church recorded that in the 2002-2003 academic year the proportion of ordinands training in the three pathways was:

12 colleges (including Wales)	40.7%
12 courses	43.3%
19 OLM schemes	16% ⁸²

The report proposed the creation of eight Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs) each with a college, a course, an OLM scheme and provision of Continuing Ministerial Education (CME).⁸³ Since then, training has become more regionalized with some courses now being based at colleges, some OLM schemes combining with courses, and other OLM schemes closing. At the same time, new patterns of training have been introduced for OPM. The Hind report also raised the profile and significance of post-ordination training by proposing that Initial Ministerial Education (IME) be reconfigured as spanning from entry into training to the end of curacy.⁸⁴

The Hind report criticized the rather strict regulations on training based on the age of candidates and the category of ministry for which they were sponsored. There were far fewer candidates under 30 and a wider range of ministries for which ordinands were training. Furthermore, candidates came with a far greater range of previous ministerial experience, theological training, and educational backgrounds. The report therefore called for flexibility: for the provision of individual pathways.⁸⁵ What emerged was the ‘Training Points Band Calculation.’ A calculation is made about what training a candidate is entitled to, based on their age and the category of ministry for which they are being sponsored: points are added for potential incumbents, those under 32 and pioneers; points are subtracted for previous theological education or substantial ministerial experience. The points total falls into a band which may be, for example, six terms at a college or nine terms on a course or a mixed equivalent. Whereas in theory there is flexibility, in practice most

⁸² Archbishops’ Council, *Formation for Ministry*, 8.

⁸³ *Formation for Ministry*, 77.

⁸⁴ *Formation*, 44.

⁸⁵ *Formation*, 131.

candidates choose to stick to the traditional pattern of either attending a college or studying on a course. For candidates over 55 training is at the bishop's discretion.

The Hind report argued strongly that all candidates for ordination should have achieved a minimum of diploma level in ministerial theology and practice before ordination, and that potential incumbents should achieve a minimum of degree level before appointment to a post of responsibility.⁸⁶ After much debate by General Synod in July 2003, this proposal was not adopted.

Common Awards

In the early part of the twenty-first century the government changed the way universities were funded. This had financial implications for the Church of England because the majority of ordinands trained for awards accredited by a university as well as by the Church. In April 2013 the Church of England entered into a contract with Durham University to produce a suite of Higher Education 'Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission.' Since September 2014 the majority of institutions training ordinands for the Church of England have been offering these awards.⁸⁷ This return to a centralization of validation eliminates the work required of the training institutions by ACCM 22.⁸⁸ In effect, the answers to the three questions posed by the report are provided in the Preface to Common Awards.⁸⁹

Common Awards does not provide a standard assessment for all candidates like the GOE, nor does it provide a set curriculum, however, it does require that all ordinands study a core of at least one module of biblical studies and at least one module of Christian doctrine, or Church history. That core comprises a third of the total credits at each level of study. During a whole programme all students study:

- at least one module related to mission, evangelism, or apologetics and

⁸⁶ *Formation*, 66.

⁸⁷ <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/common-awards-in-theology,-ministry-and-mission/about-the-common-awards.aspx> (31 December 2015).

⁸⁸ Cf. p.41 above.

⁸⁹ Eeva-Maria John, *Preface to the Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission*, <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/common-awards-in-theology,-ministry-and-mission/about-the-common-awards.aspx> (31 December 2015).

- at least one module related to Christian ministry and
- at least one module related to Christian worship or spirituality and
- at least one themed integrated learning module

Thus for a diploma, 150 credits will be taken up by ‘core choices’ out of a total of 240, and for a BA (Hons) 190 credits will be taken up by ‘core choices’ out of a total of 360.⁹⁰ There are a number of interdisciplinary modules and many modules have a strong theological reflection bias. There are traditional placement modules as well as modules focussing on corporate practice.⁹¹ It is too early to assess the influence of Common Awards on ordination training.

In November 2014, St John’s College, Nottingham announced that it would no longer be taking full-time residential ordinands. Instead, it would concentrate on full-time context based training and flexible part-time training for ordinands. This model follows that of the numerically very successful St Mellitus College in London which has no full-time residential students. Considering the ever-increasing costs of residential training, especially when maintenance grants for dependants are included, this may well be significant for the future of training for ordination in the Church of England.

Concluding Comments

Since 1800 there have been many changes in training for ordination in the Church of England. Some universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, still play a part in teaching academic theology. Some theological colleges from the nineteenth century continue to be independent foundations representing different traditions. Some regional part-time courses and OLM schemes survive. Some variations on mixed-mode training thrive. All pathways include elements of residence, and placements, alongside the study of theology. Men and women now train alongside each other in

⁹⁰ Cf. ‘Proposal for the Common Awards’, <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/common-awards-in-theology,-ministry-and-mission/about-the-common-awards.aspx> (31 December 2015).

⁹¹ Cf. ‘Introduction’, <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/common-awards-in-theology,-ministry-and-mission/about-the-common-awards.aspx> (31 December 2015).

nearly all institutions, most ordinands are older and many are married with families; thus far fewer ordinands actually reside in college full-time.

In 1800 ordinands were responsible for funding their own training. During the twentieth century the Church of England began to fund training and required potential candidates for ordination to attend a national selection conference. Those who were recommended for training were entitled to apply for a grant from central funds. With the increasing number of older ordinands with family dependants, the provision of maintenance grants by dioceses may be the straw that finally breaks the camel's back.

In 1800 all potential ordinands were expected to be graduates. During the nineteenth century this changed with the provision of training for non-graduates. However, there has continued to be debate as to whether all clergy should be graduates. One of the counter arguments is the need to increase the diversity of those who offer themselves for ordination.

Whereas in 1800 there was no agreed curriculum for ordination training, early during the twentieth century the GOE was introduced with set papers on the Bible, Christian doctrine, Church history, worship and ethics. Sixty-five years later the GOE was abandoned in favour of each training institution justifying its own curriculum. Then, early in the twenty-first century, Common Awards produced a core curriculum which reflects that of the GOE, with an added emphasis on being able to engage with contemporary society and communicate the gospel appropriately.

During the last two centuries the educational methods employed by training institutions have also changed. The emphasis on socialization into a certain group of people has diminished in favour of training for a professional role. Rather than withdrawal for preparation, importance is placed on engagement. Ministerial training has been influenced by adult education theory, in moving away from the transmission of knowledge about academic theology to a stress on learning together to reflect theologically on experience.

The national picture of ordination training continues to change year on year. Ministry Division has far greater influence than its predecessors (although bishops still have the final authority), and finance exerts increasing pressures on the provision of ministerial training.

Chapter 3: The Language of Formation in official Church of England Documents

Alongside the increasing diversity in training for ordained ministry in the Church of England during the second half of the twentieth century, a growing emphasis has been placed on formation. This chapter traces the first tentative appearance of the word ‘formation’ in the de Bunsen report, *Theological Colleges for Tomorrow* (1968), to its abundant usage in the Hind report, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* (2003), and the documentation concerning Common Awards.¹

The Evolution of a Paradigm?

In *Spirituality in Ministerial Formation*, Andrew Mayes traces the ‘evolution of the paradigm of formation.’ However, he does not explain what he means by ‘paradigm of formation.’ The nearest he comes to this is the statement in his Introduction:

The emerging holistic paradigm of ministerial formation, in contrast to former models of training or theological education, has the potential to enrich and deepen approaches to this issue, but there exists in the Anglican tradition in the UK no developed theology of formation and no clear idea about it.²

Mayes identifies ACCM 22 (published in 1987) as representing ‘the first tentative use of formational language.’³ However, the earliest official document to employ the word ‘formation’ was published in 1968. The de Bunsen report employed the phrases ‘community formation’ and ‘spiritual formation.’ It referred to theological colleges as providing ‘professional training’ in a way ‘roughly comparable to the way in which medical schools train doctors, or the way a University Department of Education or a college of Education trains teachers.’⁴ The profession that clergy need to be equipped for was considered to be a three-fold ministry of Word, sacraments,

¹ *Theological Colleges for Tomorrow*; *Formation for Ministry*; <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/common-awards-in-theology,-ministry-and-mission/about-the-common-awards.aspx> (31 December 2015).

² Andrew D. Mayes, *Spirituality in Ministerial Formation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 1.

³ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 47.

⁴ *Theological Colleges*, 1.

and pastoral care, which led to the suggestion of a three-fold analysis of what a theological college must try to do:

- a) It must provide adequate education in theology;
- b) It must provide ‘community formation’ which is described as ‘the deepening of a man’s prayer and commitment and self-knowledge in a way that is integrated with his growing grasp of theology’;
- c) It must provide an adequate foundation of practical and ‘professional’ training.⁵

When considering possible images of formation, ‘community formation’ as described in this report is reminiscent of the pebbles on the seashore, tossed against each other so that over time rough edges are worn away. In this image the sea, representing immersion in a life of prayer, is like the Holy Spirit washing over the ordinands causing them to jostle against one another. However, this image does not seem to be a biblical one.

Formation as Integration

The concept of the integration of spiritual life, self-knowledge, and theological knowledge is one which recurs in the official documentation and one which becomes increasingly important in any discussion of formation for ministry. It was already evident in *The Purpose and Scope of Clergy Training*, published in 1949:

All departments of training for ordination depend upon and influence one another. Theology, prayer and pastoral skill can none of them be taught in isolation. The discipline of character is in each and all of the activities in a Theological College. The best Theological College is one in which the Chapel, the lecture-room and the common-room are all working together to make a fellowship of Christian life both natural and supernatural, the power of which shall remain in the memory of the ordinand as a pattern and an inspiration for his future work in a congregation.⁶

As well as the integration within the life of an individual ordinand, integration becomes a key concept within the training itself. In using the word ‘foundation’ to describe what a theological college must do, the de Bunsen report recognized the

⁵ *Theological Colleges*, 2-3.

⁶ *Purpose and Scope*, 37.

need for greater integration between the theological college and the post-ordination stage of training. The report noted that

the concept of theology as a subject first to be treated as an abstract enquiry and ‘learned’, and then at a second stage to be ‘applied’ or followed by ‘practical courses’ is being replaced by an approach in which there is an overlap and integration at every stage between the ‘theoretical’ and the ‘practical.’⁷

It quickly becomes apparent that as far as those who are involved in producing official reports are concerned, integration is a key component of formation.

The de Bunsen report noted that in the traditional pattern of theological education the universities principally taught biblical history and criticism, with Greek and frequently Hebrew, whilst the theological colleges commonly concentrated on teaching systematic theology, ethics, worship, and some additional Church history, and on attending to the ‘spiritual formation’ of ordinands in a community of faith dedicated to a common task.⁸ The phrase ‘spiritual formation’ seems to refer to the corporate spiritual discipline and life of prayer.

Doing Theology Today, which was published a year later, did not use the word ‘formation’ at all; rather it employed the language of ‘theological education’ and ‘ministerial training.’ It concerned itself with ‘theological proficiency,’ ‘theological confidence,’ and ‘theological thinking.’⁹ However, the concept of integration was once again emphasized: integration between academic study of theology and spiritual life, on the one hand, and contextual awareness and practical experience, on the other. ‘The study of theology only becomes an effective component of the training of the priest when it comes into a living relationship with the inner life.’ For the study of theology to become a living discipline in the life of the priest, the report declared, it must engage not only with the priest’s faith, worship and prayer, but also with an understanding of the constantly changing world.¹⁰ ‘We are concerned that

⁷ *Theological Colleges*, 28.

⁸ *Theological Colleges*, 37-38.

⁹ ACCM, *Doing Theology Today* (London: CIO, 1969), 1.

¹⁰ *Doing Theology*, 7.

theological education as a whole should be characterised by a careful integration of rigorous theological study with planned practical experience.’¹¹

In 1974, *Patterns of Ministry* aimed to bring together the main lines of thinking about ministry in the Church of England from the reports of the preceding seven years.¹² Its author, Hugh Melinsky, used the language of ‘clergy training’; however, in discussing the de Bunsen report he equated theological education with ‘priestly formation’ which, he wrote, is ‘to borrow a phrase from our Roman Catholic brethren.’¹³ There is no indication as to whether he considered the terminology ‘theological education’ and ‘priestly formation’ to be synonymous. Melinsky also raised the problem of integration in a report published the following year in which he referred to ‘ordination training’ as having three parts: the rigorous discipline of understanding the Christian revelation in the Bible and the main features of its subsequent history; the equally rigorous understanding of the society in which the ordinand is to practise ministry; and the equally difficult discipline of understanding how these two realms of study penetrate and affect each other.¹⁴

The language of formation appeared in another report published in 1975: *Alternative Patterns of Training* was concerned with taking

the circumstances and the requirements of each ordinand seriously to try to arrange a ‘pattern’ of training which will provide the most appropriate formation of his ‘theological’ mind, arm him with pastoral skills and encourage his personal knowledge of God so that he will be able to fulfil the ministry to which he has been called.¹⁵

This is the first occurrence of the word ‘formation’ linked with the individual’s mind. In previous occurrences it was in connection with community and spirituality. A report by the House of Bishops the following year acknowledged that most of those involved in the training of the clergy attached high importance to community life as an element ‘in the intellectual and spiritual formation of the ordinand.’¹⁶ By the end of the 1970s, the language of formation in official Church of England reports

¹¹ *Doing Theology*, 22.

¹² M.A.H. Melinsky, *Patterns of Ministry* (London: CIO, 1974).

¹³ Melinsky, *Patterns*, 24.

¹⁴ Melinsky, *The Ministry of the People of God*, 12.

¹⁵ General Synod, *Alternative Patterns of Training* (London: General Synod, 1975), 23.

¹⁶ General Synod, *Theological Training* (London: General Synod, 1976), 5.

had been linked with ‘mind’ and ‘spirit’ and ‘community.’ The integration of theological study with practical experience, increasing self-knowledge, and spiritual life had also been emphasized.

Formation in the Spiritual Life

Peter Baelz was Chair of the CTE and involved in many of the reports published in the 1980s. The themes of both spirituality and integration recur in his writings. In an introductory talk to a conference on spirituality in ordination training, Baelz considered the spiritual life as a response to the gracious giving of God. In doing so he richly employed the language of formation:

A powerful image to hand in this context is that of transfiguration, or metamorphosis. The same word is used in the story of Our Lord’s transfiguration on the mountain and in St Paul’s exhortation to the Christians at Rome that they be not conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed, or transfigured, by the renewing of heart and mind so as to learn what is the perfect will of God. Thus at the basis of the Christian spiritual life is a transfiguration both of the world and of the believer. The world is now no longer seen as a self-sufficient and self-contained entity of its own, apart from God, but as the creation of God himself. God is the centre of the world. And the believer no longer sees himself as the centre of his own world, but finds a new centre for himself and for all else, namely, God in Christ. He becomes ex-centred from himself, and in-centred on God. Thus the beginnings of the spiritual life are to be found in the new way of seeing, a new vision, a new faith. It is this vision that engages heart and mind and calls forth a living and a loving response of trust and obedience.¹⁷

The language of Baelz’s talk in 1981 about the spiritual life resonates powerfully with language used by ordinands speaking about formation thirty years later: ‘transformation’, ‘transfiguration’, and ‘metamorphosis’ are all words offered by ordinands asked about the meaning of ‘formation’ for them. They also refer to the quotation from Romans 12 about not being conformed to the pattern of this world but being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Some ordinands speak about their training giving them a different perspective on life and the world. They use the language of viewing and seeing and perceiving. Chapters 5 – 6 provide more detailed analysis and discussion of the ordinands’ understanding of formation.

¹⁷ ACCM, *Spirituality in Ordination Training* (London: ACCM, 1981), 9.

In the same collection of papers, David Wheaton wrote that if the aim of ministerial education is to train Christians who will spread the light of the knowledge of Christ in the modern world (alluding to 2 Cor. 4), then they must be people who are being daily transformed, people ‘who are, to quote de Caussade’s description, “forming Jesus Christ in the depths of their hearts.”’¹⁸ In *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, the French Jesuit priest Jean-Pierre de Caussade urged his readers to accept and to embrace the will of God, whatever happens, so that the Holy Spirit might renew the image of Jesus Christ in them.¹⁹

Formation through Inhabiting Theology

In *An Integrating Theology* Baelz reported that the CTE had discussed at some length how to develop an approach to theological education in the Church of England which ‘would hold together in a creative relationship the formation of a person’s own ministerial vocation and character, the acquisition of an appropriate and serviceable knowledge of the living Christian tradition, and an understanding of the forces operating in contemporary culture both at the individual and at the social level.’²⁰ This is the first instance of ‘formation’ in these reports linked with an individual’s ‘ministerial vocation and character.’

Later on in the report Baelz expressed his dissatisfaction with the perceived dichotomy between the critical and detached study of theology in the university and the subjective faith perspective of the theological college. He insisted that in the theological college the student’s approach should still be critical and detached but also self-involving and engaged. The ordinand ‘must learn to inhabit’ the theology being studied. According to Baelz this is the difference between a critical understanding and awareness which is an end in itself, and a critical awareness and understanding which is the servant of Christian discipleship and ministry.²¹

¹⁸ *Spirituality*, 69.

¹⁹ Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence* (London: Catholic Way Publishing, 2013), 17.

²⁰ Peter Baelz, *An Integrating Theology* (London: ACCM, 1983), 3.

²¹ *An Integrating Theology*, 8.

Another report published in the same year identified the benefits of residential training as being ‘communal meals, corporate worship, seminars and lectures, time to study, time to share insights and understandings with contemporaries, time to allow for the formation of knowledge with practical experience.’²² The idea of formation taking time is echoed in discussion with both theological educators and ordinands. A later report expressed concern whether two years at a college was an adequate length of time for ministerial training and formation.²³

The 1984 publication *Experience and Authority* reported discussions about the relationship between theological concepts and the educational ideologies which underlay patterns of theological education. It did not employ the language of formation but it was concerned with integration. The report reiterated the belief that the context in which learning takes place is often of as much importance as the curriculum which takes place within that context and that the context may significantly affect the outcome of that learning.²⁴

Experience and Authority referred to Bernstein’s typology of educational activity which made a distinction between a ‘collection code’ and an ‘integrated code.’ According to Bernstein, ‘any collection code involves a hierarchical organization of knowledge,’ with strong boundaries between subject areas, so that ‘the ultimate mystery of the subject is revealed very late in the educational life’ and only to those who are socialized into it. This perspective views learning as acquiring the tradition. In contrast, an integrated code blurs the boundaries between subjects and requires ‘teachers of different subjects to enter into social relationships with each other’ which ‘arise out of a shared, co-operative educational task.’ This perspective views learning as reflecting together on experience.²⁵ Rather than agree with this distinction between collection and integrated codes, *Experience and Authority* prefers the language of ‘doing theology’ and argues that ‘the knowledge to be acquired in theological education can never be simplified into what is a wholly intellectual matter or what is wholly emotional; it involves the whole person in such a way that his or her identity is at stake, and it rarely involves that person in

²² ACCM, *The Financing of Training* (London: CIO Publishing, 1983), 102.

²³ Gordon Kuhrt, *Issues in Theological Education and Training* (London: ABM, 1998), 19.

²⁴ ACCM, *Experience and Authority* (London: ACCM, c. 1984), 12.

²⁵ Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 85-115.

isolation.’²⁶ When the ordinands in the empirical study were asked to identify the locus of formation, the majority of them emphasized that it was the whole person who was being formed rather than the mind, or spirit, or character, or skills.²⁷

Formation through Reflection on Experience

In 1985 two significant reports were published by the Church of England. Neither of them was primarily concerned with ministerial training but both had things to say about it. The controversial report *Faith in the City* was convinced that the training offered to clergy was not only inadequate but often inappropriate for those who would minister in Urban Priority Areas (UPAs).²⁸ The report called for the promotion of Local Non-Stipendiary Ministers (LNSMs) in UPAs.²⁹ Without any explicit mention of formation, it suggested that a suitable programme of training for LNSMs would be based on field-work, involving project work and placements in UPAs. Such training would include some residential weekend work on themes emerging from the project work and placements. It would use modern adult education skills and the primary concern of the training would be to develop theological reflection.³⁰ What mattered, according to the report, was whether clergy ‘have developed habits of reflection and social awareness such that they can draw creatively on their resources of theology and spirituality in the face of new realities and engage in a dialogue with those of other faiths or none.’³¹

A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry, known as the Tiller report, similarly placed an emphasis in ordination training on the development of an integrated theology using Bible study, history, and the behavioural sciences, with reflection on previous experience. The basis of this integrated training would be ‘the relationship between prayer, belief and action in the mission of the Church.’³² Although these reports were not produced by those responsible for ordination training they are included in this survey because they mention ‘developing habits of reflection’ which is a key notion

²⁶ *Experience and Authority*, 34.

²⁷ Cf. pp.151-152.

²⁸ ACCUPA, *Faith in the City* (London: CHP, 1985), 119.

²⁹ ACCUPA, 112.

³⁰ ACCUPA, 116-117.

³¹ ACCUPA, 119.

³² John Tiller, *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* (London: CIO Publishing, 1985), 147.

in formation: thus these reports illustrate the continuing movement towards the concept of the reflective practitioner.

Patterns of Ministerial Training, which was also published in 1985, researched ‘the relative merits of the various patterns and styles of training presently used in theological colleges and courses and their suitability for ministry as presently exercised in the Church of England.’³³ It included comments on the part that community or residence has to play in ‘spiritual formation’ and ‘the formation of character.’ By 1985 the increase in the ratio of married to single students had had a major impact on the pattern of residence and communal life at all colleges, but the report observed that the traditional pattern of college community life was most closely preserved by the Anglo-Catholic colleges who placed a very high value on ‘the part the community plays in spiritual formation and in the preparation of candidates for parish ministry.’³⁴ In discussing the part residential education may play in ‘the formation of student’s character,’ the report quoted Sir Walter Moberly’s comment that ‘the most effective education for community is through actual experience of the challenges, stimuli, responsibilities and necessary adjustments of community life.’³⁵

Patterns of Ministerial Training used a questionnaire survey of clergy to seek their opinion regarding the balance between the various subjects included in their training. More than half of the respondents indicated that too little time had been given in their training to teaching, prayer, counselling, spirituality, and preaching.³⁶ These opinions were common to candidates who trained residentially and part-residentially. This demonstrates that although community life plays a part in spiritual formation, it does not necessarily lead to it. These findings repeat those of the earlier report *Alternative Patterns of Training*, and of my interviews of ordinands. Another finding, which was repeated in my interviews, was that the residential weekends and week of a course, although of relatively short duration, may be very intensive and ‘formative experiences.’³⁷ In the conclusion of the report the strengths of full-time

³³ Hodge, *Patterns*, 1.

³⁴ Hodge, 11-12.

³⁵ Hodge, 55.

³⁶ Hodge, *Patterns*, 33.

³⁷ Hodge, *Patterns*, 66.

residential training were described in terms of ‘the time and space it provides, not only for formal study but for helping candidates living and worshipping together in a community to grow and be formed as ministers of the church.’³⁸ *Patterns of Ministerial Training* is the first official document to use the language of ‘formative experiences,’ to identify formation with growth, and to indicate the purpose of formation.

ACCM 22: Formation in Wisdom and Habit of Life

It was in 1987 that the word ‘formation’ came to prominence in official Church of England documentation, with the publication of ACCM 22 and a speech by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, entitled *Theological Education Today*.

The report acknowledged that the impression was given by official reports that

only academic matters are considered important in the formation of an ordinand. Even if college or courses are at times encouraged to be concerned with the personal formation of their students, the need to satisfy ‘ACCM requirements’ may lead to preoccupation with academic to the exclusion of other central concerns.³⁹

This is the first instance of the phrase ‘personal formation.’ According to ACCM 22, the task of the ordained minister is to focus the ministry of the whole Church by ‘recognizing, coordinating and distributing the ministry of others,’ therefore ‘training should be such as to produce interdependent ministry.’ Interdependent ministry, or ‘interanimative’ ministry, calls for people ‘who have begun to be conformed in their nature to this ministry and task.’⁴⁰ The report does not unpack what it means by the phrase ‘conformed in their nature,’ however it does mention that this requires the development of personal qualities, and that theological education will need to be conceived as a lifelong process of personal development. The report expected the ordinand to seek ‘to be conformed to the very form of God’s being for mankind in the world, intellectually, spiritually and practically, and into the discipline of thought and life which is implicit in this.’⁴¹ It does not clarify what is meant by the phrase ‘to be conformed to the very form of God’s being.’ It may simply signify becoming

³⁸ Hodge, *Patterns*, 91.

³⁹ *Education for the Church’s Ministry*, 18.

⁴⁰ *Education*, 33.

⁴¹ *Education*, 37.

more like Christ. For Mayes it evokes Phil. 2:6-8, 'the form required by God's *kenosis*.'⁴² According to ACCM 22, this conformation is to be achieved through seeking to grow in wisdom and godliness, therefore theological education should

seek to form the ordinand in this wisdom and habit of life as a 'virtue' bestowed by the grace of God, both for itself and for its representation in the Church and in the world. It is a 'virtue' which requires personal discipline – intellectual, spiritual, moral and practical.⁴³

The language of 'wisdom and habit of life' furthers Baelz's argument that education for ministry needs an integrated theology. As Jacob wrote in a festschrift for Baelz, ACCM 22 developed 'the concept of "an integratory theology appropriate to the context"' in terms of ministerial education and it emphasised the need to develop an explicit role for such education.' The integrating approach to the study of theology 'would be formative for students, enabling them to inquire for the truth, seeking thereby to know the God who presents himself in truth and to learn to maintain the truth with critical rigour and appropriate freedom.'⁴⁴

The understanding of theological training as a 'habitus' or wisdom for living, rather than a theoretical knowledge divided into sub-disciplines, builds on the insights of Edward Farley. Farley understood the ancient concept of *habitus* as 'a cognitive disposition and orientation of the soul, a knowledge of God and what God reveals.' He argued that from the twelfth to the seventeenth century '*theologia* is a state and disposition of the soul which has the character of knowledge.' Theology was seen as 'a *practical*, not theoretical, habit having the primary character of wisdom.' The biblical concept of wisdom is neither a purely theoretical intellectual understanding, nor a purely practical applied knowledge as in skills: it is rather a way of life oriented towards God (e.g. Ps. 111:10, Prov. 9:10), and modelled upon Christ (1 Cor. 1:22-24, 1 Cor. 1:30). According to Farley, such wisdom may be a gracious gift from God (connected with faith, prayer, virtues and yearning for God) but it may also be enhanced through human study (especially of the Scriptures and their interpretation) and argument.⁴⁵

⁴² Mayes, *Spirituality*, 48.

⁴³ *Education*, 37-38.

⁴⁴ Jacob, 'An Integrating Theology', 186.

⁴⁵ Edward Farley, *Theologia* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 35-36.

ACCM 22 proposed that the goal of ministerial education should be seen as the acquisition of ‘the wisdom and godly habit of life which are engendered by God’s self-presentation in the world and by his grace in the Christian’ along with the understanding of ‘how they are to be exercised in and through the corporate ministry of the Church of England for the world.’⁴⁶ As Heywood noted, both Farley and ACCM 22 ‘came down firmly in favour of theology as spectacles for interpreting the world rather than simply “knowledge about.”’⁴⁷

The language of formation is used in different ways in the report. Mayes noted ‘to be conformed to the very form of God’s being’, ‘formation in wisdom’, and ‘the formation of Church life.’⁴⁸ He argued that the last use illustrates the potential for confusion in the language of formation; however, the only difference is that whereas the first two concern how the individual is formed, the third example concerns corporate formation. These are linked in that the purpose of the individual’s formation is to enable that person to foster the formation of the Church’s life.

Wilton noted that ACCM 22 used similar language to Kelsey’s description of the ‘Athens’ rather than the ‘Berlin’ paradigm. The ‘Athens’ paradigm is rooted in the culture of ancient Greece where *paideia* ‘meant a process of “culturing” the soul, schooling as “character formation.”’⁴⁹ Within this paradigm, theological education is understood as ‘a movement from source to personal appropriation of the source, from revealed wisdom to the appropriation of revealed wisdom in a way that is identity forming and personally transforming.’⁵⁰ The ‘Berlin’ paradigm derives from the establishment of a faculty of theology within the University of Berlin in 1810. It stresses the interconnected importance of two quite different enterprises: orderly, disciplined critical research, and ‘professional’ education for ministry.⁵¹ Within this paradigm theological education is understood as ‘a movement from data to theory to application of theory to practice.’⁵² Wilton argued that ACCM 22 expounded a consistent view of ministerial education according to the ‘Athens’ paradigm:

⁴⁶ *Education*, 37.

⁴⁷ David Heywood, ‘Learning How to Learn’, *JATE* 6, no. 2 (2009), 171.

⁴⁸ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 48.

⁴⁹ David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 6.

⁵⁰ Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 19-20.

⁵¹ *Athens and Berlin*, 12.

⁵² *Athens and Berlin*, 22.

focussed on personal formation including notions of wisdom, virtue, habit and discipline. Study is deep and intelligent, yet subservient to the greater truth. It is undertaken in a reflective and meditative environment. Community-life is a key element of this paradigm and is actively shared by staff and students alike.⁵³

Chapman observed that the report takes the approach that ‘all parts of the educational programme are to be seen in relation to, or “relativised” by, the central aim of theological education; and no one part should be seen as the heart of the process.’⁵⁴ The same emphasis on integration in formation was reiterated in the Archbishop of Canterbury’s speech published as *Theological Education Today*. He said that ‘ministerial training, if it is to be successful, must attempt to integrate the intellectual, spiritual, moral and practical in a way that is appropriate for the different types of people who offer themselves for the Church’s ministry.’⁵⁵ He asserted that theological colleges and courses should provide both the environment and the means by which ordinands receive ‘the necessary *formation* for the ministry to which they feel themselves called.’ He also reiterated that formation is a life-long process but that the foundations needed to be laid prior to ordination.⁵⁶

Mayes concluded that ‘certainly ACCM 22 marks the beginning of a paradigm shift towards a more dynamic model of training.’⁵⁷ As has been demonstrated above, however, there had been a gradual progress in the direction of an integrated dynamic model of theological education during the preceding twenty years, mainly driven by key individuals such as Peter Baelz.

Formation through Conversation

In a report published the year after ACCM 22, Rowan Williams (at that time chairman of the CTE) called the Church

to look to a model of theological formation that allows some productive ‘conversation’ between different frames of reference and accounts of experience, traditional and contemporary, ‘interior’ and practical, so as

⁵³ Gary Wilton, ‘From ACCM22 to Hind via Athens and Berlin’, *JATE* 4, no. 1 (2007), 41.

⁵⁴ Chapman, *Ambassadors*, 15.

⁵⁵ ACCM, *Theological Education Today* (London: CHP, 1987), 9.

⁵⁶ *Theological Education Today*, 9.

⁵⁷ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 48-49.

to help nurture an integral personal vision, a discipline of informed reflection – ‘wisdom’ rather than skill alone.⁵⁸

This was the first occurrence of the phrase ‘theological formation’ in the official Church of England documentation under consideration here. The language used is reminiscent of that employed by Baelz and builds on his contribution to the work of the CTE. The encouragement of a ‘conversation’ between theology and experience presages current models of mixed-mode and contextual training. Conversation is a very common theme in theology, especially practical theology, and it forms the methodological basis for the empirical study conducted as part of this research.⁵⁹

The concept of nurturing was one offered by theological educators when asked about their understanding of their place in formation. The language of vision, view, and perspective becomes more common following ACCM 22. Theological reflection and the cultivation of wisdom become the stated goals of theological education for ministry. But above all ‘ministerial formation is concerned with the development of the student as a whole person so that theology, spiritual development and self-expression can be integrated.’⁶⁰

The report *Ordination Training on Courses* declared that the central core staff comprised the main resource for the pastoral and spiritual formation of students.⁶¹ During my interviews, ordinands expressed appreciation for both the pastoral care they received from the core members of staff and the spiritual practices they were introduced to by them. The report also expressed concern that it was difficult to achieve and monitor the personal and ministerial development of ordinands, and their ‘spiritual formation’, due to their dispersal.⁶² However, this is possible through regular monitoring by, and good communication between, all those involved in the training such as core staff members, local supervisors and tutors.

⁵⁸ ACCM, *Theology in Practice* (London: ACCM, 1988), 5.

⁵⁹ Cf. p.80.

⁶⁰ *Theology in Practice*, 37.

⁶¹ ACCM, *Ordination Training on Courses* (London: ACCM, 1989), 19.

⁶² *Training on Courses*, 26.

Formation through Corporate Life

In 1990 *Residence: an Education* was published. Residence was considered to be crucial to training for ordination because it encouraged certain characteristics regarded as ‘essential for ministerial, spiritual, and personal formation.’ With regard to personal formation, a course principal wrote, ‘It is vital that in ministerial formation students live together for residential periods where they are vulnerable to one another’s continued gaze and enquiry both during and after the formal education sessions.’⁶³ The report pointed out that it is not only during the period of residence but also in the processes involved in entering it and leaving it that ‘we have an educational instrument for the formation of the minister.’ The report also tackled what it called ‘the myth of residence,’ with increasing proportions of ordinands both married and single living in accommodation away from the college.

It is spiritual formation that is claimed to be most affected by residential training through the integration of the prayer of the Church, the ordinand’s understanding of their part in that as a public representative of the Church, and the individual’s prayer life.⁶⁴ The working party that produced the report concluded that ‘Residence and community in ministerial training are not ends in themselves... Their main purpose is to equip men and women for the ordained ministry of the Church... the goals of training... have not only to be clearly identified but also carefully sought by prayer, activity and reflection.’ When that is the case, the report stated, then residential training ‘should nurture right attitudes and inculcate correct habits.’⁶⁵

Theological Training: A Way Ahead repeated the belief that ‘elements of “residence” are considered indispensable aspects of theological training’ particularly in relation to ‘ministerial formation through worship, prayer and personal development.’⁶⁶ It recognised that the years of training were ‘life-changing as well as transformational,’ and that colleges provided several contexts in which ‘change can be given impetus’ through different interactions between the individual ordinand and others.⁶⁷

⁶³ *Residence*, 12, 7.

⁶⁴ *Residence*, 6, 13-14, 30.

⁶⁵ *Residence*, 2, 53.

⁶⁶ *A Way Ahead*, 37-38.

⁶⁷ *Way Ahead*, 161.

As ACCM became ABM, two reports were published as interim evaluations of the college and course responses to ACCM 22: *Ordination and the Church's Ministry* and *Integration and Assessment*. The first report evaluated responses to the first question: What ordained ministry does the Church of England require? In doing so it recognised that the Church and its clergy are part of the culture, but asserted that 'they *interpret* the culture in a different way, against a different horizon.'⁶⁸ One of the ordinands I interviewed spoke of formation being like John's visions in the book of Revelation: being taken to a different vantage point, and being introduced to an alternative perspective.⁶⁹

Ordination and the Church's Ministry expressed concern that corporate life can be distorted either by pressure (inward from students or outward from the institution) to conform to a given norm, or by ordinands who pursue ordination as an individual goal.⁷⁰ In interview, several ordinands expressed concern that formation might mean being forced into a particular mould. Indeed many of the college and course responses spoke of the need to guide the personal formation of ordinands in their growth in personal holiness, in a discipline of daily private and corporate prayer, and in a continuing encounter with, and renewal by, God's Spirit. The report considered it essential 'to underline the degree to which growth in holiness is achieved partly through corporate formation in prayer and liturgy, and not just through the individual's prayer and meditation.' It reiterated immersion in both corporate and individual prayer as being consistent with forming ministers to exercise corporate and not individualistic ministry because 'the Church of England has historically understood that the common prayer and sacraments of the Church... are a fundamental way in which the Church as the Body of Christ is formed.'⁷¹

Integration and Assessment provided an interim evaluation of the college and course responses to the ACCM 22 questions 'What is the shape of the educational programme best suited for equipping people to exercise this ministry?' and 'What are the appropriate means of assessing suitability for the exercise of this ministry?' With

⁶⁸ ABM, *Ordination and the Church's Ministry* (London: ABM, 1991), 11.

⁶⁹ Cf. pp.149-150.

⁷⁰ *Ordination*, 15.

⁷¹ *Ordination*, 38-39.

respect to the first question the report states that ‘this educational programme includes not only a curriculum of courses of study or syllabus, but also the structured elements of training in skills, the application and relating of practice and theology, pastoral formation, personal and spiritual development and formation.’ According to the report, theological training was to be seen in terms of the all-round development of the person, therefore ‘links need to be made between growth in knowledge, understanding, prayer and holiness, ministerial skills, personal development and ministerial formation.’ There was an emphasis on integrating knowing, doing and being. Knowledge was defined as including both theory and empirical data, and experience as including both an intellectual grasp of theory and the practical experience which theories attempt to illuminate.⁷²

Ministerial Formation

Mayes asserted that in *Integration and Assessment* ‘the Church of England took significant steps forward in its understanding of ministerial formation.’ He observed that the report used ‘two key words in preference to formational language’ but then wrote about the *concepts* of ‘integration’ and ‘interaction.’ However, he seems to have missed both the various examples cited above of the use of formational language, and the historical development of increasing emphasis on integration as an essential component of formation. Mayes wrote that ‘the language of integration entails a fitting together of different parts of the jigsaw; a making of connections between prayer, theology and ministry.’ The different pieces of a jigsaw interlock but sit alongside one another, whereas integration, as it is understood in the discourse of formation in theological education, is more like the ‘dynamic interplay’ that Mayes suggested is the meaning of the word ‘interaction’ as employed in this report.⁷³

A booklet aimed at informing candidates about the different training opportunities within the Church of England in 1992 revealed that only a few of the institutions employed the word ‘formation’ in their self-description. The Aston Training Scheme proclaimed that it embodied ‘the conviction that a high level of self-awareness,

⁷² *Integration*, 7, 14, 19.

⁷³ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 49-50.

group and personal skills informed by the habits of spiritual discipline and theological exploration, are pre-requisites in ministerial formation.⁷⁴ Cranmer Hall claimed that ‘a tutorial system ensures the personal profiling of each student’s course, including their spiritual, academic and practical ministerial formation.’⁷⁵ Ripon College, Cuddesdon stated that the work of the college fell into four principal areas, ‘reflecting the need for spiritual formation, theological education, pastoral practice and ministerial skills.’⁷⁶ And the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course offered ‘a three-year course of “ministerial formation,” enabling the student to acquire theological knowledge and pastoral skills and to continue his or her personal development.’⁷⁷ Thus, ‘ministerial formation’ was used by three of these institutions as an overarching term, and ‘spiritual formation’ as one element of training by the fourth.

By the early 1990s the phrase ‘ministerial formation’ seemed to be in common usage. A review of the LNSM schemes made several references to ‘ministerial formation’ without any indication of what this might mean. A comment with reference to the Southwark scheme comes closest to revealing an understanding of the phrase. The comment occurs in the context of explaining that the final study course was entitled ‘Spiritual Development’, which gave particular emphasis to ministerial formation, ‘though there is a continuous concern throughout the course to relate theology with spirituality and ministerial practice.’⁷⁸ This suggests that ministerial formation integrates theology with spirituality and ministerial practice. The report also observed that the Manchester and Southwark schemes used the language of transformation. The Southwark scheme spoke of ‘a process of being transformed to God’s purposes.’ That transformation was expected to involve many levels from the individual in training, to their community, the Church, and the wider society of which they were a part.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ ABM, *Theological Training in the Church of England* (London: ABM, 1992), 14.

⁷⁵ *Theological Training*, 18.

⁷⁶ *Theological Training*, 25.

⁷⁷ *Theological Training*, 38.

⁷⁸ ABM, *A Review of LNSM Schemes* (London: ABM, 1992), 34.

⁷⁹ *Review of LNSM Schemes*, 27.

Formation as Induction into a Tradition

Hugh Melinsky, who was Chief Secretary of ACCM for five years before becoming the Principal of the Northern Ordination Course, wrote *The Shape of the Ministry* in 1992. In that publication he acknowledged difficulty in finding the right terminology for discussing adult Christian education (or training, or development, or formation).⁸⁰ Melinsky noted that ‘training’ normally presupposed a clear-cut end product, which is not the case with ordained ministers. He then suggested the broader term ‘education’, ‘a process concerned with the discovery of truth and with the development of the truthful enquirer,’ but realised that this lacked the vocational element. He observed that Roman Catholics preferred the term ‘formation’ for the development of both clergy and laity since ‘this term puts emphasis on the involvement of the whole person,’ but some saw it as ‘too suggestive of brain-washing.’ Melinsky concluded that ‘the key process for ministers is induction into a tradition, and in so far as this has a testable result, the term “training” is still useful.’⁸¹

This seems to be how the word ‘formation’ was understood in official Church of England reports published in the early 1990s. A report on the criteria for selection for ministry asserted that the training for which candidates were being selected required not merely intellectual ability but also ‘preparedness to enter a process of personal formation for an inter-dependent ministry concerned with serving the mission of God in the world.’⁸² A subsequent report on recruitment included frequent use of the word ‘formation’ both in its findings and its recommendations. The contexts included ‘formation and nurture’ of Christian communities, encouraging the development of a ‘culture of formation,’ and the ‘formation of candidates.’⁸³ It concluded that ‘above all young people can be **formed**, both in training and by the communities which they serve. It is communities and parishes

⁸⁰ Melinsky, *Shape*, 143.

⁸¹ Melinsky, *Shape*, 249. For a different view see Richard Peters, *Authority, Responsibility and Education* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), 94.

⁸² ABM, *The Report of a Working Party on Criteria for Selection for Ministry in the Church of England* (London: Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, 1993), 34.

⁸³ ABM, *Recovering Confidence* (London: Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, 1996), v, vii.

which form priests particularly “first career” priests – and they need to have the confidence to be able to do so.’⁸⁴

Mission and Ministry: Formation as Preparation for Ministry

Ten years on from ACCM 22, *Mission and Ministry: The Churches’ Validation Framework for Theological Education* reviewed progress in the provision of education and formation for ordained ministry. The report repeatedly employed the phrase ‘theological education and formation’ either indicating that the two nouns ‘education’ and ‘formation’ are not synonymous and therefore both elements are required, or that they have become collocated to describe the whole. A further linguistic question is whether the adjective ‘theological’ applies to ‘education’ alone or whether it applies to both nouns. I suspect the former is the case, because the phrase ‘theological formation’ does not occur in the report. This implies that ‘theological education’ and ‘formation’ are thought to be two separate elements of training. This would be borne out by the concern expressed in the report on reading responses from colleges and courses to ACCM 22. Those responses demonstrated that there was still a disproportionate emphasis on academic assessment with a failure to assess the practical and formational aspects of training.⁸⁵

Mission and Ministry reiterated that ‘what is required is a means of forming in ordinands the wisdom and habit of life by which to identify the situations by which the Church is formed and to which it must address itself.’ The Church of the day was perceived as needing in its ordained ministers ‘not so much bodies of knowledge but patterns of life and thought to adapt them to their contexts.’ The emphasis in training should be on ‘formation as suitable persons’ for ordained ministry, not simply on gaining ‘discrete areas of skill or knowledge.’ There should be a synthesis of knowing, being and doing, and in order to encourage this, penultimate and final reports on ordinands should, ‘in an integrated way comment on the academic, practical and formational aspects of training.’⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Recovering Confidence*, 22.

⁸⁵ *Mission and Ministry*, 13.

⁸⁶ *Mission and Ministry*, 25, 37, 41, 47.

The report proposed revision of the three ACCM 22 questions to training institutions: ‘What is the training institution’s understanding of the mission to which the Church of God is called and of the pattern of Church life and order through which the Church of England responds to that calling?’, ‘In the light of that understanding, what are the main characteristics of ordained and other public ministries for which the training institution seeks to prepare its candidates?’, ‘What is the process and content of ministerial education and formation which will most appropriately prepare candidates to begin the lifelong exercise of these ministries?’ and ‘What forms of assessment are most appropriate for determining the suitability of candidates to begin the exercise of these ministries?’⁸⁷ This revision introduced the word ‘formation’ into the third question in explicitly asking to see ‘the process and content of ministerial education and formation.’ The report stated that ‘in giving a rationale for programmes, we want institutions to indicate how the discrete elements of the programme – whether “academic” or “practical” or “formational” – contribute to the educational programme as a whole as preparation for ministry.’ It is interesting to see the phrase ‘discrete elements’ when the report states that seeing how an institution brought together the academic, practical and formational assessment would disclose whether it was offering ‘a fully integrated preparation for ministry.’⁸⁸

A comment about the staffing requirements of institutions in *Mission and Ministry* reveals that ministerial formation was understood as ‘deepening the life of faith in the candidate,’ with the role of the public, ordained minister specifically in mind.⁸⁹ A contemporary report on LNSMs noted that were two primary contexts of parish and peer group within which some aspects of ministerial formation were undertaken.⁹⁰ Concern was expressed that in those schemes where there was a particular bias towards the parish context of the training, there tended to be ‘difficulties in achieving priestly formation’ and in those schemes where a large proportion of the training was in the LNSM peer group, there were ‘deficiencies in the development of the local team.’⁹¹ This is the first occurrence of the phrase ‘priestly formation’ in an

⁸⁷ *Mission and Ministry*, 51.

⁸⁸ *Mission and Ministry*, 56-57.

⁸⁹ *Mission and Ministry*, 83.

⁹⁰ ABM, *Stranger in the Wings* (London: CHP, 1999), 79.

⁹¹ *Stranger*, 79.

official report. In this context it is used to distinguish between those who are training for ordained ministry and those who are training for lay ministry on the same course.

The Hind Report: Formation for Ministry

A working party set up by the Archbishops' Council, with Bishop John Hind as its chair, produced an interim report entitled *The Structure and Funding of Ordination Training* in February 2002. Its task was to undertake a fundamental review of ordination training. It sought 'to review the ministerial training needs of the Church as a whole with a particular attention to the theological education, ministerial formation and training of the clergy.'⁹² The report began with a very helpful review of 'the sometimes confusing terminology used in this field.' Many of the comments echo those written by Melinsky ten years earlier.⁹³ They are reproduced here in full:

- The popular term 'training' is regularly used for the entire process of initial (i.e., pre-ordination) training. It carries with it, however, the implication that this is something that *ends* at ordination, as well as, to some ears, inappropriate utilitarian overtones. In more specialist uses, the Church has a range of language.
- Some prefer to speak of 'preparation' for ordination to denote the whole of pre-ordination training.
- Others will distinguish between the educational (or academic), formational and training dimensions of the whole process. This is a helpful set of distinctions in that it indicates the complexity of task, involving the intellect, the whole person and relevant skills.
- The term 'formation' has come to mean either the whole process or that part of it which refers to personal, liturgical and spiritual development in preparation for the distinctive role of the ordained.
- The term 'theological education' is often used synonymously with initial training for ordained ministry, even though presumably it is hoped that the clergy's theological learning will continue after ordination. It carries the important point that preparation for ministry involves substantial theological study.
- This language can be given more precision by speaking of 'initial ministerial education' (IME) for the pre-ordination phase and 'continuing ministerial education' (CME) thereafter. In turn the former Post-Ordination Training (POT) has been almost universally displaced by CME1-4 (the first four years) which is followed by CME (or continuing ministerial education and development, CMED) more generally.

⁹² Archbishops' Council, *The Structure and Funding of Ordination Training*, 1.

⁹³ Melinsky, *Shape*, 249.

- ‘Ministerial training’, the term we use most in this report, is itself ambiguous as it encompasses training for ordained and lay ministries.⁹⁴

In the final published version of the report, entitled *Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church* and known as the Hind report, the last bullet point was amended to ‘in this report we have normally used the term “ministerial education”, encompassing the formational, educational and training aspects of preparation for ordination ministry, though we also use the shorthand “training.”’⁹⁵ The terms ‘ministerial training’, ‘ministerial formation’, and ‘ministerial education’ were used regularly in both versions of the report and appear to have been used interchangeably.

Both reports noted that in the case of theological colleges formation for ministry was offered ‘through the opportunities afforded by full-time study, the worship and communal life of the college and an extensive range of placements.’⁹⁶ The Hind report added that the college environment offered formation within a particular Church tradition.⁹⁷ In the regional courses ‘formation or development for ministry’ was facilitated by ‘the community of prayer and learning, especially during the residential elements (weekends and Summer or Easter schools), in conjunction with the candidate’s continuing experience of work or home and his or her own parish and placements.’⁹⁸ The Hind report added that the course offered formation within a community that included a wide range of Church traditions and that ‘the distinctive characteristic of this pattern of formation is the *movement between gathered and dispersed modes of the intentional community of formation.*’⁹⁹ According to both reports, OLM schemes emphasized ‘two primary locations for the formation of candidates:’ the home parish and the educational programme, which utilized the learning and worshipping community of staff, ordinands and others and included placements and practical training.¹⁰⁰ The Hind report added that ‘*the distinctive characteristic of this pattern of formation is attention to the growth of collaborative ministry in a local context, combined with the movement between the life of home,*

⁹⁴ *Structure and Funding*, 2-3.

⁹⁵ *Formation for Ministry*, 3.

⁹⁶ *Structure and Funding*, 5; *Formation for Ministry*, 4,7.

⁹⁷ *Formation for Ministry*, 119.

⁹⁸ *Structure and Funding*, 5; *Formation for Ministry*, 7.

⁹⁹ *Formation for Ministry*, 120.

¹⁰⁰ *Structure and Funding*, 6; *Formation for Ministry*, 8.

*work, community and parish and the intentional community of formation.*¹⁰¹ The language of ‘communities of formation’ is introduced in the Hind report which declared, ‘our reflections on formation indicate that we believe that is vital [sic] for training to take place in community.’¹⁰²

In the final version of the report, a section entitled ‘Formation for ministry’ was added because consultation on the interim report had revealed that the working party had been perceived as being more interested in academic attainment than in the formation of the person for ministry. The working party claimed that in the interim report they had tried to put forward ‘an integrated view of preparation for ordained ministry, encompassing its formational, educational and training strands.’¹⁰³

Mayes argued that *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* ‘marks a major shift in Anglican thinking towards making formation the key paradigm of theological education.’¹⁰⁴ He discerned ‘significant developments in thinking’ between the interim report and the final version as a result of the consultation process. He wrote, ‘A rather personalized and ambiguous understanding of formation was advocated by the *Interim Report*.’¹⁰⁵ In order to substantiate this comment he quoted, ‘Ordination training is concerned both with personal formation and with the knowledge and skills needed for ministry.’¹⁰⁶ Mayes then declared that the Hind report registered ‘a shift in understanding, from seeing formation as only one element in the training process to accepting it as the central model.’¹⁰⁷ However, the exact quotation from the interim report also appears in the Hind report in the same immediate context of a discussion about the role of the ordained ministry within the body of Christ.¹⁰⁸ The quotation from the interim report was taken from Chapter 3, entitled ‘Theological priorities for ministerial education,’ the first sentence of which stated: ‘the purpose of ordination training is the formation of ministers.’¹⁰⁹ This is the chapter which was most heavily revised in the final report with the chapter title becoming ‘Some

¹⁰¹ *Formation for Ministry*, 121.

¹⁰² *Formation for Ministry*, 123.

¹⁰³ *Formation for Ministry*, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 51.

¹⁰⁵ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 52.

¹⁰⁶ *Structure and Funding*, 22.

¹⁰⁷ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 52.

¹⁰⁸ *Formation for Ministry*, 32.

¹⁰⁹ *Structure and Funding*, 21.

Theological Priorities.’ A later sub-heading ‘Theological education and formation’ was introduced in place of the initial sentence.¹¹⁰

In two additional paragraphs under that sub-heading the Hind report acknowledged that some people prefer the term ‘formation’ rather than either ‘education’ or ‘training’ for ministry:

This has the advantage of implying a process that shapes the whole person, has resonances with ideas of growth and change and fits in well with theology as a spiritual discipline. A further advantage of the use of the term ‘formation’ is that it encourages the concept of lifelong growth and learning. It is central to the thinking of this working party that the purpose of the early stages of ministerial education should not be to provide the knowledge and skills which will be necessary throughout ministry, but to establish the patterns of learning, piety and competence which will sustain an appetite for continued growth.¹¹¹

The words ‘process’, ‘shaping’, ‘whole person’, ‘growth’, ‘change’, and ‘lifelong’ were all offered by ordinands in the empirical study. The ‘implications’ of the word ‘formation’ identified in the Hind report cohere with the connotations reported by the ordinands.¹¹²

The second additional paragraph in the Hind report continued:

It is important not to see formation merely as a process of moulding. Formation for ministry, like Christian formation as a whole, must take its tone from Paul’s expression in Galatians 4:19 where he describes himself as being ‘in travail until Christ be formed in you.’ It is rather a matter of being conformed to the pattern of Christ and his ministry. As such it is a creative process initiated and sustained by God and is inseparable from the call to sacrifice and the cross that are implied in Christ’s call to ‘Follow me.’ ... It is also important not to understand formation as being concerned solely with questions of spirituality and discipleship which is then added as a third element alongside ‘education’ (= academic study) and training (= learning skills for ministry.) Rather ‘formation’ should be seen as the overarching concept that integrates the person, understanding and competence.¹¹³

Mayes quoted the second part of this paragraph as evidence that the Hind report

¹¹⁰ *Formation for Ministry*, 29.

¹¹¹ *Formation for Ministry*, 29.

¹¹² Cf. Chapter 5.

¹¹³ *Formation for Ministry*, 29.

accepted formation as the ‘overarching concept’ in training for ordination.¹¹⁴ He then saw an ‘unresolved tension’ in the report ‘between a definition of formation which is predominantly functional in its approach to ministry and one that relates to a more ontological understanding.’¹¹⁵ Rather than get caught up in the dichotomy between functionality and ontology, one way forward might be to see formation as inhabited wisdom for a purpose.

In another new section under the sub-heading ‘Formation for ordained ministry’ the Hind report stated that ‘in today’s context’ it is necessary to be much more explicit about ‘the ministerial or “representative” role for which candidates are being prepared.’¹¹⁶ ‘Today’s context’ is not described. From the rest of the section, however, it might be inferred that the working party had in mind that vocations to ordination tend to come from individuals rather than from churches calling people forwards.¹¹⁷ As White argued, within the Anglican Church the primary objectives of ministerial formation are the needs of the world, and the needs of the Church in service of the world, not of the psychological and pastoral needs of the students in training.¹¹⁸ The Hind report acknowledged that personal development may indeed be a necessary part of ministerial formation, but that it is not the goal in itself. It then explained that the term ‘formation’ was at best a convenient short hand. ‘It alludes to elements of *transformation*, the Spirit of God at work in fallible human beings, *forming* Christ in them. At the same time, candidates put themselves at the service of the Church, and participate in a process of being *conformed* to the public role.’ That public role is conceived as including prayer, ‘acting as a spokesperson on behalf of and to the Church,’ continued growth in theological and ministerial learning, and ‘leadership of the Christian community.’¹¹⁹

Jeremy Worthen, former Principal of the South East Institute for Theological Education, criticized the Hind report for having only a relatively brief section on the concept of formation and for not giving a clear explication of exactly what is involved in conformity to the public role. He inferred from the context that this is

¹¹⁴ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 52.

¹¹⁵ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 52.

¹¹⁶ *Formation for Ministry*, 38.

¹¹⁷ See *Recovering Confidence*.

¹¹⁸ John A. White, ‘A Future for Anglican Ministerial Education’, *ATR* 79, no. 3 (1997), 397.

¹¹⁹ *Formation for Ministry*, 38.

about professional formation.¹²⁰ On the other hand Paul Overend, then on the staff of the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS), believed that the term ‘formation’ was ‘adopted as a metaphor of education’ by the Hind report and understood ‘in terms of reflective discipleship within an evolving tradition.’¹²¹

The Hind report itself asserted that there is no one model of formation and stated:

*ministerial formation is a dynamic and continuing process that draws on a range of contexts, in which the candidate moves between gathered and dispersed settings of the Church’s life, and, under supervision, is helped to grow towards the role of the ordained, defined in terms of service, holiness, vocation and mission.*¹²²

Chapter 5 of both the interim and the final report proposed ‘a new framework for ministerial education’ using the language of ‘formational journey.’ The rationale for such a framework in the interim report included the statement:

the framework can harmonise intellectual and formational elements of education and training. Importantly, it can demonstrate that formation is achieved by means of intentional practice in worshipping communities where outcomes can be demonstrated and evidenced – and set alongside the concept and practice of ‘inhabited Wisdom.’¹²³

In the final version of the report, the emphasis was changed and the text read ‘the framework can *harmonize intellectual and formational elements* of education and training. By holding together the three strands of the ministerial, vocational and educational, it can promote and enable growth into “inhabited Wisdom.”’¹²⁴ Mention of ‘intentional practice in worshipping communities’ alluded to residence whereas that connotation has been removed from the final version of the report.

Under the heading ‘developing the framework’ the interim report identified three broad areas of knowledge and understanding, spiritual and ministerial formation, and skills (in reflective practice). The report stated that ‘the consistent approach from ACCM 22 to the present has sought their creative integration in educational programmes so that education for the Church’s ministry is consistently oriented to

¹²⁰ Jeremy Worthen, ‘A Model of Ministerial Formation’, in Angela Shier-Jones (ed.), *The Making of Ministry* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2008), 42.

¹²¹ Paul Overend, ‘Education or Formation?’, *JATE* 4, no. 2 (2007), 141.

¹²² *Formation for Ministry*, 39.

¹²³ *Structure and Funding*, 38.

¹²⁴ *Formation for Ministry*, 51.

forming and developing habits of godly wisdom.’¹²⁵ The Hind report used the terminology of ‘domains’ of learning and identified the three domains as ‘Knowledge and Understanding’, ‘Spiritual and Ministerial Formation’ and ‘Ministerial Skills’. It then asserted that the three domains ‘are described separately *only* in order to ensure that the importance of each domain is clearly recognized. In terms of the development of an individual or the design of a syllabus their integration is of primary importance.’¹²⁶ Whereas the interim report used the same three headings for its ‘draft benchmarking statement for deployable clergy’,¹²⁷ the Hind report used the headings ‘Being – growing in faith, discipleship, prayer and vocation’; ‘Knowing and understanding’; and ‘Doing – developing skills in and for ministry.’¹²⁸ In this instance, it seems that the interim report was more in line with the historical development of the concept of formation in official Church of England documentation than its successor.

Shaping the Future: Forming Communities of Practice

The 2006 report *Shaping the Future* understood theology as *habitus* – laying stress not on the acquisition of knowledge or skills, but on the development of people of faith within communities that shape Christian living. It reaffirmed the vision that ‘character (being/spirituality/vocation) is being transformed in Christ through engagement with self, others, Scripture and the Christian tradition (doing/skills/practice) for the sake of deep knowledge (metanoia/practical wisdom).’¹²⁹ The report claimed that an emphasis on the formation of *habitus* in Christian communities took seriously the historical and corporate nature of the Church. It also laid the emphasis in theological study upon nurturing human beings who know God to be the ground and source of their being, and are confident and fluent enough in Scripture and Christian tradition as lived reality so that they can be open to those whose experience is different. Thus, the report declared, they will be

¹²⁵ *Structure and Funding*, 41.

¹²⁶ *Formation for Ministry*, 56.

¹²⁷ *Structure and Funding*, 42-44.

¹²⁸ *Formation for Ministry*, 58-59.

¹²⁹ Archbishops’ Council, *Shaping the Future* (London: CHP, 2006), 60.

able to help the people of God bear witness to the riches God offers in Jesus Christ.¹³⁰

Williams noted that *Shaping the Future* offered a number of different models of theological and ministerial education and he suggested that if there is an ultimate ‘learning outcome’ of Christian theological education then ‘it must have to do with the formation of “communities of practice” that more effectively perform the faith visibly and distinctively amidst the world.’¹³¹

Common Awards: Formation as Transformation into the Likeness of Christ

The online documentation around the introduction of Common Awards in 2014 illustrates the ever-increasing profile of formation in official Church of England documentation. The *Preface to the Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission*, written for staff, students and interested individuals, explains that Common Awards adhere to an understanding of Christian education as ‘akin to the classical Greek conception of education – *paideia*.’ It then states:

Formation relates to the transformation of learners into the likeness of Christ and into ways of being, knowing and doing that inhabit the kingdom of God and reflect the God-given callings for which learners are being prepared. It involves the cultivation of virtues, spiritual disciplines, self-mastery and self-awareness, but, above all, seeing the knowledge, love and worship of God as the only and ultimate goal of learning from which all other learning flows.¹³²

Thus it brings together many of the elements mentioned in previous documents and firmly places the perspective of the Church of England on ministerial education in Kelsey’s Athens paradigm rather than his Berlin paradigm. This marks a return to a pre-Enlightenment approach to theology. Furthermore, there is a noticeable absence of any mention of the need for critical thought in the process of formation.

The *Preface* recognizes that growth in inhabited wisdom requires engagement with

¹³⁰ *Shaping the Future*, 60-61.

¹³¹ John A. Williams, ‘Ministry and Praxis’, *Discourse* 9, no. 2 (2010), 185.

¹³² *Preface*, <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/ministerial-education-and-development/common-awards-in-theology,-ministry-and-mission/about-the-common-awards.aspx> (31 December 2015).

‘the other,’ the Christian community, with self and with God. Participating institutions, therefore, are to ‘reflect the Trinitarian community of the Godhead’ in relationships of self-giving love between staff and students. They are to encourage students to be inspired when they encounter difference, seeing such experiences ‘as prompts to become better listeners to the Spirit and to the “other.”’ During my interviews it was noticeable that those students who engaged prayerfully with their experiences of encountering difference, seeking God in the ‘other’, reported that those experiences were formative for them.¹³³

The *Preface* states that ‘the heart of the content of the Common Awards is the development of a theological habitus for participating in God’s mission in the world.’ It emphasizes the importance of the integration of everything for this to happen and, as an illustration, it includes a quotation from Kathleen Calahan, ‘When theological educators strive to make integration a goal, a process, and a strategy [...], we are essentially seeking to form and educate a person with integrity.’¹³⁴

The Common Awards also seek to address the difficult issue of how to assess formation. The *Preface* recognizes that such learning often takes place within the ‘hidden curriculum’ of relating to tutors, supervisors and peers, participating in community life, practising personal disciplines of study and prayer, as well as in ‘reflexive engagement with the world.’ It asserts that formation may be measured through assessment but acknowledges that it is more likely to be discerned through relationships and mentoring.

Formation according to the Church of England

It has taken nearly fifty years from its first appearance for ‘formation’ to come to the fore in official Church of England documentation regarding training for ordination. Whereas Mayes described this historical journey as ‘the evolution of a paradigm,’ it seems more appropriate to describe it as the rediscovery of an earlier understanding of theology as inhabited wisdom, with the word ‘formation’ indicating the process of

¹³³ Cf. p.152.

¹³⁴ Kathleen Calahan, ‘Introducing Ministry and Fostering Integration’ in Dorothy C. Bass & Craig Dykstra (eds.), *For Life Abundant* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 115.

integration by which that happens. According to the official documents, formation for ordained ministry is fostered through a deepening spiritual life, inhabiting theology, reflection on experience, conversation, experience of corporate life and induction into a tradition. Together these elements serve to establish the patterns of learning, piety and competence necessary for sustaining the minister in the public role to which they are called. The Church recognizes that ultimately formation is the work of the Holy Spirit forming the likeness of Christ within the individual.

The next section of this thesis explores how some ordinands training on a regional course both understand and experience formation.

Part II: Research Method and Findings

Chapter 4: Context and Methodology

The preceding chapters have described the wider context of the empirical study. This chapter justifies the use of the correlative method in this research, describes the training course from which the empirical data was gathered, discusses the relevance and nature of metaphor, and describes in detail the research methods employed.

Methodology

Tracy's revisionist model 'holds that a contemporary fundamental Christian theology can be best described as philosophical reflection upon the meanings present in common human experience and language, and upon the meanings present in the Christian fact.'¹ It involves a process of mutual interrogation, of critical conversation between Christianity and culture, between theology and other disciplines. Tracey uses the term 'critical correlation' and Graham *et al.* note the 'dialogical qualities' of this correlational method.² However, the terminology of conversation is preferable to that of correlation because, as Whitehead and Whitehead point out, correlation connotes interaction of faith and culture on a cool rational plane whereas conversation includes potential for interruption, disagreement and surprise.³

The correlative method is appropriate to this research because the subject requires integration of personal experience with theologies of ordained ministry and educational theories. It necessitates a critical conversation between the relevant sources of the Christian tradition, personal experience and cultural resources,⁴ with the biblical language of formation and theologies of priesthood being two relevant strands of the Christian tradition.

¹ David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 43.

² Elaine Graham, Heather Walton & Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 139.

³ James Whitehead & Evelyn Whitehead, *Method in Ministry* (Oxford: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 4.

⁴ Whitehead & Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, ix.

My own experience was the catalyst for this project. The empirical study investigated the personal experience of students in initial ministerial education and the first years of ordained ministry. It also engaged staff of the training institution in conversation about the preliminary findings. The cultural resources (other disciplines) of philosophy and linguistics are used to elucidate metaphorical language, and educational theory acts as a conversation partner in providing further reflection on formation as a model of education.

Separation of the three sources (Christian tradition, personal experience and cultural resources) is somewhat artificial, in that all three sources are pluriform, overlapping and ambiguous:⁵ the personal experience of some students is articulated in the language of biblical metaphors; for many scholars a theology of priesthood is related to the practice of priestly ministry in society, therefore it is inevitably contextual; educators considering formation tend to be those concerned with theological (not necessarily Christian) education; and historically within philosophy and linguistics scholars investigating metaphor have discussed religious language.

Whitehead and Whitehead combine the three sources of information relevant to decision making in contemporary ministry in a tri-polar model. They propose a three-stage method moving from insight to action through attending, assertion and pastoral response. Through this movement information is clarified, coordinated, and allowed to shape pastoral action.⁶ Attending means seeking information from the sources whilst assertion refers to the dialogue between them. In attending or listening closely, sources must be taken on their own terms, explored openly and honestly, with judgement suspended. During assertion an awareness of the underlying presuppositions of sources and attendant implications is necessary as they are brought into conversation with one another. This process may lead to various insights into the meaning of formation in ordination training, or various meanings for formation in this context, thus the most important requirements for the researcher are sensitivity, willingness to face diversity and ability to tolerate ambiguity.⁷ Pastoral response requires translation of insight into action: How should formation

⁵ Graham *et al.*, *Methods*, 161.

⁶ Whitehead & Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, ix; diagram on page 6.

⁷ Whitehead & Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 16.

be defined in the context of training for ordination in the Church of England? What does the perspective of ordinands bring to the discussion about formation for ordained ministry? The answers to these questions may be complicated and multifaceted.

The Course

The empirical data for the critical conversation about formation was gathered by a case study investigating how ordinands on one part-time ecumenical regional training course understood and experienced formation during their initial ministerial education and the first few years after ordination. STETS was chosen because it was one of the first training institutions to use the language of formation in the 1980s.⁸ When Mayes surveyed colleges and courses, comparing the hard copy of each prospectus from 2002 with the 2007 online prospectus, he noted that ‘STETS alone had explicit and prominent references to the formation process.’ Mayes observed that ‘formational language permeated its three primary aims of education, training and forming.’⁹

STETS was one of the first initial ministerial training institutions to describe its objectives in terms of knowing, doing and being.¹⁰ The 2002 *Course Prospectus* stated that ‘knowing’ entailed being educated to ‘analyse the personal, cultural and institutional practices by which people are formed in daily life’; ‘doing’ involved being trained to ‘discover possibilities for Christian formation’; and ‘being’ concerned being ‘formed and equipped to embody and express the ways of God in the life of the Church in the world.’¹¹ The *Course Handbook* for students for the academic year 2008-2009 stated that one of its primary and interrelated aims was

to form you to participate responsibly in the mission of the Church by integrating your learning and ministry within the particularities, complexities and adversities of your own life and the lives of your communities.¹²

⁸ STETS staff discussion, 19 Feb 2011.

⁹ Mayes, *Spirituality*, 57.

¹⁰ STETS *Course Prospectus* 2002.

¹¹ Mayes, 57.

¹² STETS *Course Handbook* 2008-2009, 4.

This is both formation for the purpose of responsible participation ('doing') and formation into the sort of person who is disposed to participate responsibly by means of the integration of learning and ministry in a specific context ('being').

One striking aspect of the *Course Handbook* for 2008-2009 was the emphasis on providing an integrated theological education, training, and formation at each level of study. This was built on incrementally through a spiral design so that regular and recurrent attention was paid to the three core elements of Scripture, Theology, and the Church in Mission producing opportunities for development and integration of learning.¹³ The empirical study records the extent to which those training on the course reported experiencing that integration. With explicit mention of formation in the course documentation and during the induction process, ordinands on this course should have been aware of the language of formation.

I decided to investigate the perspective of ordinands training on a part-time course because of the increasing proportion who are training this way. Unlike the majority of part-time courses, which gather students together on a weekly basis (usually in an evening), STETS only gathers students together in their particular year group for six residential weekends a year at Sarum College in Salisbury Cathedral Close. All ordinands attend the residential week together in an independent boarding school during the Easter vacation. Meanwhile undergraduates study distance learning modules by themselves and meet together in small groups (of up to three people) with a tutor most weeks to discuss the materials. MA students are not in tutorial groups: they study distance learning materials at home and attend seminars together on four Saturdays a term. Although studying academic theology at different levels, all ordinands follow the same Developing Ministry Modules covering personal development, practical skills and placements: the distance learning modules include some formational work.

Following the Hind report and the development of RTPs,¹⁴ STETS became part of the South Central Regional Training Partnership (SCRTP). Its Vision Statement asserts that 'As partners working collaboratively, we seek to foster the formation of

¹³ STETS *Handbook* 2008-2009, 36-37.

¹⁴ *Formation for Ministry*, 77-88.

the whole church, in which the call to and nurture of both the individual and the community are inseparable.’ The Foundation Document mentions learning rather than teaching, and training is included within education; it thus outlines its approaches to ‘learning, education and formation.’ Under the heading ‘Formation’ it states:

We recognise that formation for public ministry involves the individual, their community of faith, the wider Church and their training institution helping the individual grow towards the role to which they are called.

This acknowledges the different communities involved in formation. It regards formation as growth and considers formation to be for the purpose of public ministry, for a particular role within the Church. The Foundation Document then suggests that in formal training contexts formation is fostered by:

- belonging to and contributing to a community of faith;
- worship, prayer and study of scripture;
- truthful engagement with peers and tutors;
- engaging with the whole person;
- engaging with the processes of personal development;
- a growing capacity to explore and articulate faith;
- being aware of the diversity of theological positions and of one’s own stance within it;
- discerning and taking responsibility for one’s contribution to the work of the Kingdom.¹⁵

This provides a helpful list for a critical conversation with the results of the empirical study. Do the ordinands training on a course which is an integral member of SC RTP report these factors as significant to their formation?

STETS was also selected because when the empirical study began (2009), I was a part-time core member of the academic staff (teaching biblical studies) and a personal tutor for a group of ordinands in their second year of training. I had easy access to the other members of staff and could regularly engage in discussions with them about their understandings of formation and perceptions of the formative process. Like me, most of the staff had trained for ordination in residential colleges, although one part-time core member of staff had trained on STETS.

¹⁵ <http://www.scrtp.org.uk/policy-documents-and-guidelines/> (31 December 2015).

Metaphor

Informal conversations about formation with the staff and students at STETS elicited stories, images, similes and metaphors, often based on their experiences of being in a process of formation during ordination training. Few interlocutors attempted any analytical definition of formation. My conversation partners seemed to be reaching for something they could not express literally and in doing so they offered metaphors.

Metaphors are powerful means of communicating in new and creative ways. Aristotle famously declared, 'If one wants to master speech, one must master metaphor.' Metaphor was seen as a particular way of using language, to carry meaning beyond what was usually meant. It belonged to the field of rhetoric and, according to Quintilian, was designed to 'move the feelings, give special distinction to things and place them vividly before the eye.'¹⁶ The recognition that metaphors have affective power as well as communicative content became known as the 'emotive theory.'

During the Enlightenment this emphasis led to metaphor being viewed with suspicion. When Kant separated knowledge into two mutually exclusive classes of 'aesthetic' and 'useful', metaphorical language was seen to express the former and 'literal' or scientific language the latter.¹⁷ Scientific language might be described as cognitive, and metaphorical language as non-cognitive or maybe trans-cognitive. Metaphor came to be seen as merely ornamental, emotive and therefore probably deceptive, whereas 'scientific' language expressed truth. This was the case until twentieth-century Western philosophers began to take language seriously and metaphor was rehabilitated. It was realized that if language is the vehicle of communication then the form that language takes must be taken into account when deciphering the message. This is significant for the interpretation of conversations and interviews – how something is said is important to understanding what is said.

¹⁶ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Book 8, 6.19.

¹⁷ Ian Paul, 'Metaphor' in Kevin J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 507.

Aristotle stated, ‘Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.’¹⁸ Richards extended this definition, describing a metaphor as a way of articulating ‘two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction.’¹⁹ These two thoughts he called the ‘tenor’ of the metaphor (its underlying subject) and the ‘vehicle’ (the mode in which it is expressed). In the statement ‘God is the potter,’ for instance, ‘God’ is the tenor and ‘the potter’ is the vehicle.

Whereas for Aristotle metaphor concerned denomination, Ricoeur follows Richards in arguing that metaphor has to do with the semantics of the sentence rather than the semantics of a word. He claims that ‘since a metaphor only makes sense in an utterance; it is a phenomenon of predication, not denomination.’ The metaphor is the result of the tension between two opposed interpretations of the utterance. Metaphorical interpretation presupposes literal interpretation that does not make sense, ‘it self-destructs in a significant contradiction.’ This, following Beardsley, is what Ricoeur calls a ‘metaphorical twist.’²⁰

Metaphor is a matter of semantics not syntax. It is not inherent to the language system (semiotics); it is a matter of language use and interpretation. Soskice defines metaphor as ‘that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another,’²¹ and McFague follows Ricoeur in suggesting that metaphorical statements always contain the whisper ‘it is *and it is not*.’²² One metaphor offered by participants in the empirical study was that of God the potter. In asserting that ‘God is a potter,’ the metaphorical statement is at the same time claiming that ‘God is not a potter’ in that God has no physical hands with which to form a pot. This can only be understood as metaphor by those who share knowledge of the usual referents of the words ‘potter’ and ‘God.’ This metaphor is found in Jeremiah 18 with echoes in the New Testament. In Jeremiah 18 it serves to

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, XXI, 4.

¹⁹ I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 93.

²⁰ Paul Ricoeur, ‘Metaphor and Symbol’ in *Interpretation Theory* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 49-51.

²¹ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 15.

²² McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 13.

emphasize God's freedom to act as he chooses. But there is also a contrasting element (the 'is not' of the metaphor) in that the clay itself is responsible for whether it will be shaped by the potter: it can frustrate the potter's intention and cause him to change it – something that makes no sense in real-life pottery.²³

McFague argues that 'metaphor is a way of *knowing*, not just a way of communicating. In metaphor, knowledge and its expression are one and the same; there is no way *around* the metaphor, it is not expendable.'²⁴ Metaphors are ways of sharing different understandings, new perspectives. It is possible to argue that metaphors are inappropriate or don't work, in which case alternative metaphors may be suggested, but it is not possible to express metaphors in propositional forms because, as Paul notes, 'the connections that metaphor makes actually reorganize the perceptive world.' Metaphors are like lenses focussing on particular perspectives. The coining of a metaphor implies selectivity: certain features of the subject are identified, and others effectively ignored. Thus, as Paul notes, 'the act of coining a metaphor is itself an act of interpretation, of selecting, emphasizing, and drawing attention to certain aspects of reality, but ignoring, sidelining, or passing over other aspects.'²⁵

Ricoeur identifies root metaphors as 'the dominant metaphors capable of both engendering and organizing a network.'²⁶ A root metaphor evokes a whole field of meaning. In this research 'shepherd' appears to be a root metaphor for the life and work of an ordained priest, whereas McFague identifies 'the Lord as shepherd' in Psalm 23 as a model.²⁷ She defines a model as a dominant metaphor, one with staying power, which becomes a major way of structuring and ordering experience.²⁸

Whether an utterance is considered to be nonsensical or metaphorical will depend on whether or not the interlocutors share sufficient context to be able to comprehend one another. As Eco points out:

²³ Cf. Robert Banks, *God the Worker* (Sutherland: Albatross Books, 1992), 99f.

²⁴ Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables* (London: SCM Press, 2002), xvi.

²⁵ Paul, 'Metaphor', 508-509.

²⁶ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 64.

²⁷ *Metaphorical Theology*, 135-137.

²⁸ *Metaphorical Theology*, 23.

No algorithm exists for the metaphor, nor can a metaphor be produced by means of a computer's precise instructions, no matter what the volume of organized information to be fed in. The success of a metaphor is a function of the sociocultural format of the interpreting subjects' encyclopedia. On this basis, metaphors are produced solely on the basis of a rich cultural framework.²⁹

In order to understand the tenor (cognitive content) of a metaphor, a person needs to understand something of the reality of the subject. The hearer needs to be able to grasp the semantic range of the vehicle when the metaphor was coined in order to know which parts belong to the 'is' and which belong to the 'is not.' In order to understand Jesus as the good shepherd (John 10), interpreters need to be aware of the biblical picture of leaders as shepherds in the Old Testament (literary context) as well as first-century shepherding (historical cultural context). As Sara Maitland reminds us, 'for a metaphor to work at the emotionally persuasive level it not only has to be expressed in beautiful, powerful language, it also has to chime with authentic experience and recognizable events or objects.'³⁰

It thus becomes clear that research into formation for ordained ministry, which is often discussed in metaphorical language, requires both intellectual understanding of the concept of formation and authentic experience of formation itself.

Research Methods

Whereas quantitative research methods may be used to gain a general indication of the popularity of particular metaphors and the distribution of their usage, a fuller understanding of metaphors, particularly newly coined ones, requires the more comprehensive exploration of qualitative research methods. Whereas a quantitative self-completion questionnaire can provide a snapshot of respondents' understanding and experience of formation, semi-structured interviews allow greater opportunity for exploring meanings of metaphors and analysing narrative accounts of experiences of formation. In order to provide a more comprehensive account of the area of enquiry this project relies on mixed methods, employing a combination of

²⁹ Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 127.

³⁰ Sarah Maitland, 'I do not want the Hills Levelled, the Valleys Filled in and the Roads made Straight', in *The Tablet* 22/29 December 2012, 28.

quantitative and qualitative research.³¹ The quantitative questionnaire facilitated the sampling of respondents for the qualitative interviews and was used for instrument development in refining questions for qualitative semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews enhanced the findings from the questionnaire and enabled triangulation.³²

The self-completion questionnaire was designed to approach formation from several different angles.³³ Question one was ‘What words would you use to describe your understanding of formation?’ and respondents were asked to write at most two sentences. This aimed to be a gentle way into thinking about formation, allowing respondents to begin from their own perspective. I had discerned from informal conversations that some people did not like the word ‘formation’ for various reasons, therefore question two asked whether formation was a good word to use in relation to training for ministry. Those who answered affirmatively were asked in what ways it was a good word. Those who answered negatively were asked to suggest ‘a better word.’ Question three offered eight images which had been used to describe formation either in conversation or published works. Respondents were asked to indicate which image best captured their view of formation.

These three questions were concerned with eliciting students’ understanding of formation, whereas question four asked ‘What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?’ Students were presented with eleven metaphors in the form of a five point Likert scale labelled ‘Not at all’ – ‘A lot’. They were asked to ‘tick the box which represents the extent to which each metaphor expresses your own experience of formation.’ The subsequent question sought to elicit any words or images which the respondent would use to describe their own experience of formation for ordination. The last page of the questionnaire asked for information about the participant’s previous formal formation such as for Reader ministry, along with age, gender, year group and academic course.

³¹ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), ch. 25.

³² The use of more than one method or source of data so that findings can be cross-checked. Cf. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 700.

³³ See Appendix A for the Questionnaire.

The questionnaire was made available to all students on the course during the residential week in 2009. Several different members of staff made announcements throughout the week explaining the nature of the study and requesting participation. The questionnaires were left on a table at the back of the main hall for students to collect, complete, and return to a labelled box on the same table. There were 119 students on the course. 120 questionnaires were taken and 87 returned (R.1 – R.87), a very good response rate of 73%. This was most probably due to the captive audience, the encouragement to participate by various staff members, the fact that most of students knew the researcher and that, as ordinands themselves, the students had a vested interest in reflecting on the language of formation for ordained ministry.

Using valid percentages (i.e. not including missing cases), 29% of respondents were male and 71% female compared to the course statistics of 34% and 66% respectively. The preponderance of female respondents may be due to the female researcher or to the subject matter of the questionnaire. The proportion of students in each year group according to course records was 28% first year, 38% second year and 34% third year. The distribution of those who completed the questionnaire was 26% first year, 42% second year and 32% third year. The prevalence of responses from those in the second year could be due to this being the year group with which the researcher worked most closely.

The questionnaire concluded with a request for volunteers to be interviewed. 52% of those who returned completed questionnaires were willing to be interviewed (45 people). 27% of those respondents were male and 73% female, representing a slight increase in the ratio of female to male respondents compared to those who completed the questionnaire (see above). The distribution of those willing to be interviewed across the year groups was 27% first year, 42% second year and 31% third year: almost identical to that for completion of the questionnaire.

Due to constraints of time and geographical spread of students across southern England, it was decided to interview a third of those who responded (14 people; 16% of those who completed the questionnaire). The sampling followed the ratio of two-thirds female to a third male and interviewees were taken from across the year groups, with six from the second year and four each from the first and third years.

Ages ranged from 29 to 70, but there were insufficient numbers willing to be interviewed in each age group to take the whole range into account, although it was possible to allow for some variation by ensuring that not all interviewees from each year group came from the same age group. Older people seemed to be more willing to be interviewed (50% of those under 50; 65% of those who were 50+). As self-reporting of academic course did not match official course records, that could not be taken into account. (It seems that many hoped to complete a higher qualification than the one for which they were registered.) 81% of respondents answered 'yes' to formation being a good word, but as there was no difference in their answers to other questions this was not taken into account. 25% of respondents had trained as Readers, but there was no discernable difference in their answers.

Once the sampling criteria of gender, year group and age had been met, interviewees were purposively selected according to those who had contributed most in the questions asking for their own reflections on formation (questions one, two and five). They were specifically chosen because they seemed most likely to engage with the interview questions. This introduced a bias in favour of the more creative and expressive student. None of the interviewees had trained as Readers. One question which had not been asked was which denomination respondents belonged to. Whilst the vast majority of students were training for ordained ministry within the Church of England, there was one Methodist student and several URC students training to be Ministers of Word and the Sacraments.

The fourteen potential interviewees (I.1 – I.14) were emailed this request:

You may or may not remember that when you kindly completed the questionnaire about formation at Easter School, you indicated that you would be willing for me to interview you about formation. If you are still willing to have a conversation about formation in the near future please could you let me have your telephone number or give me a ring on the number below. Thank you very much.

All responded positively. I telephoned them, engaged in informal conversation and confirmed that they would be willing to meet to have a conversation about formation and that they would be happy for that conversation to be recorded. Dates and times were agreed for thirteen interviews. The remaining interview was not logistically feasible so another person was identified according to the sampling criteria and

emailed as above. For five of the interviews I travelled to see the interviewee in their own home. These interviewees were noticeably more relaxed than those that took place in the course base during a residential weekend (five interviews), or my home study (three interviews). One interview took place in a café near the interviewee's home.

Each interview began with informal conversation and the preparation of beverages. When appropriate I explained that in accordance with the Durham University's ethical guidelines I needed to give them an information sheet and ask them to sign a consent form. The interviewee was given two copies of the information sheet and consent form (which were back to back on one A4 sheet).³⁴ One copy was signed and returned for filing and the other copy retained. I also pointed out that the sheet contained contact details for myself and my supervisors. When the interviewee was ready, I switched on the recorder and asked the first question, recording the semi-structured interview.

The interview questions were based on and developed from those contained in the questionnaire.³⁵ The first question about understanding formation directly related to the first three questions of the questionnaire: 'What do you understand by the word "formation" in the context of training for ordination?' It served as a foundation for discerning development in comprehension over the two years of the study and was expected to reveal some dependence on official course documentation and communication at the start of the students' training.

The responses to the questionnaire had included less biblical language and imagery than I had hoped for as a teacher of biblical studies, so subsidiary questions sought to focus attention on the language interviewees used by asking them whether they thought their own language derived from the bible or everyday experience. They were also asked whether they were aware of a change in their language during their ordination training.

³⁴ See Appendix B for Information Sheet and Consent Form.

³⁵ See Appendix C for the Interview Questions.

The second interview question related to questions four and five of the questionnaire, asking interviewees to describe their own experience of formation, specifically focussing on what it had felt like. Since the interviews took place three to four months after respondents had completed the questionnaire, the subsidiary question asked whether there had been any particular experiences that had been formative since the residential week. This was included because second year students would be completing a placement in an unfamiliar context over the summer months.

The third question returned the focus to biblical language specifically aiming to elicit biblical metaphors or phrases which interviewees found helpful in describing their experience of formation. It was hoped this would disclose whether biblical metaphors were taken from the Old Testament (such as potter or gardener) or from Paul's letters (such as renewing minds or imitating Christ). This question elicited a completely different narrative from each interviewee, revealing their methods of biblical interpretation without providing the responses hoped for. It revealed either a lack of biblical knowledge or an inability to reflect on scriptural knowledge without prior warning. The fact that I taught them biblical studies might have inhibited interviewees and made them wary of answering this question in case of making mistakes, although every person did provide an answer.

The fourth question arose from reading the literature about formation for ordained ministry in different denominations and realizing that there were different emphases with some writers concentrating on educating the mind, others focussing on spiritual growth, others concentrating on developing character, and others skills for professional ministry. Interviewees were presented with these four perspectives and asked whether they thought any aspect of themselves had been particularly formed during their training. A subsidiary question asked for examples of how different aspects had been formed. This question sought to ascertain whether it was possible for participants to discern a primary locus of formation or whether it was more about the whole person being formed.

The fifth question attempted to discern any correlation between the level of engagement with an aspect of training and the perceived locus of formation. Interviewees were asked whether there was a part of their training which they had

particularly enjoyed, suggestions given were academic study, tutorial groups, residential weekends, developing ministry work, or placement. The subsidiary questions asked ‘Why?’ and ‘Which aspect have you put most energy into?’ This was followed by a question allowing for other factors not yet mentioned such as staff, location of residential components, or even something completely outside the course which might have been formative for an individual: ‘Can you describe a particular person, experience, subject, location, or event which has been noticeably formative for you during your ordination training? How was this formative?’

The final interview question sought to ascertain the participant’s theological perspective on priesthood. They were told that some people see a priest as primarily a person who performs certain tasks, whereas others see a priest as a person who is set apart to be different from other people. Then they were asked how they would describe a priest in relation to those two views. If they were required, subsidiary questions were ‘How do you see priesthood?’ and ‘What is its essence?’ It became apparent during the interviews that three of the interviewees were training to be Ministers of Word and Sacraments within the URC whereas the rest were training for ordination within the Church of England. To my surprise, however, denominational allegiance did not make any obvious difference to the responses to this question. This may have been because the interviewees had imbibed views from their peers and knew that I was an Anglican priest.

As interviewer, I asked all interviewees all of the questions in the order given, allowing time and space for reflection and for the interviewee to tell stories in their own way. The interviews were semi-structured but the interview style could not be called ‘active,’ with both interviewer and interviewee involved in making meaning, as described by Holstein and Gubrium.³⁶ I did not engage in conversation any more than was necessary to encourage the interviewee to continue, or to clarify what was being said, yet the recordings reveal far more verbal affirmation from me, such as ‘thank you,’ ‘yeah’, and ‘mm’, than I had been aware of!

³⁶ James A. Holstein & Jaber F. Gubrium, *The Active Interview* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

At the end of each interview, I asked the interviewee whether they would be willing to be interviewed again in two years time. All interviewees agreed. This was usually followed by some informal conversation before we parted company. During the post-interview chat two of the interviewees explicitly expressed gratitude for the opportunity to discuss formation and indicated that if they had not been asked to reflect on recent experiences they might not have considered them to be part of their formation for ordained ministry.

In recognition of the vital importance of reflexivity, I filled in a post-interview review sheet as soon as possible after the interview.³⁷ This recorded factual information such as a description of the location of the interview and extraneous noises which may affect the interpretation of the recording. It also logged interesting conversational data which was not recorded. In addition it documented personal reflections on the experience of the interview, observations on the evident anxiety levels of the interviewee, most probably resulting from the dynamics of the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and occasions when the interview was in danger of turning into counselling. These post-interview review sheets helped me become more attentive in successive interviews, and some of the information aided the interpretation of the audio recordings.

I transcribed each interview as soon as practically possible. The transcription was verbatim and each transcription was subsequently checked twice for accuracy. The interview transcripts were then coded with NVivo 10 in two phases: first to broad concepts such as ‘encountering difference,’ which might be considered as top-down processing from the researcher’s perspective; and secondly to words, for example ‘placement’ and ‘challenging,’ which can be seen as bottom-up processing deriving from the actual words employed by the interviewee. A journal was kept whilst coding to record observations, reflections and learning during the process of coding. Alongside this, immediately after coding each interview transcript, notes were made of impressions gained about the interviewee’s understanding and experience of formation and the language and metaphors employed. Following the coding of all 14 interviews, summaries were made of the responses to each interview question. The

³⁷ See Appendix D for the Post-Interview Review sheet.

data assigned to each code was also summarized. Thus the data was examined from three different perspectives: according to the interviewee, the question, and the code.

At this stage of the empirical study I met with the staff of the course to discuss the initial findings from the analysis of the questionnaire and the coding of the interviews, and to obtain their reactions. In preparation for that meeting they were invited to complete questions one to four of the questionnaire concerning their understanding and experience of formation (S.1 – S.7). Their responses were collected and analysed. There was a lively discussion which was recorded, transcribed (T.), and subsequently coded.

Two years after the initial interviews I contacted the interviewees by email and asked them to re-read their interview transcript and to comment further on their original answers and how their views had changed since then. 13 out of 14 interviewees responded (I2.1 – I2.14). On reflection it would have been better to edit the verbatim transcripts because a couple of participants expressed dismay about what appeared to be their lack of articulation and frequent use of fillers such as ‘um.’ The advantage of having ongoing contact with the interviewees meant that I was able to respond with reassuring comments about the difference between spoken and written language.

By this time, only the students who had completed the questionnaire during their first year of training were still in training, nearing ordination. All other participants were in ordained ministry, the second years as deacons, and the third years as priests. The URC interviewees were coming to the end of a two year practical placement in preparation for taking on a post of responsibility. The aim of this second contact was to discover how participants’ understanding of formation had developed and whether their choice of metaphors to articulate that understanding had changed. The phased snapshots enabled a longitudinal element to the research within the time constraints of a part-time doctorate.

In order to provide a broader range of responses from participants in ordained ministry, those who had originally agreed to be interviewed but were not included in the original sample were emailed the interview questions and asked to respond in

writing. This resulted in another 13 responses (E.15 – E.27) out of a potential 31. All were female. When they completed the questionnaire ten would have been in the second year, and three in the first year. All had been taught by me and knew me. By this stage most of those who had completed the questionnaire would have moved home on completion of training and possibly changed email addresses so they may not have received the request to participate. A few responded to the email but did not provide answers to the questions. Those who did engage with the questions reported finding the exercise beneficial. One second year respondent about to be ordained priest wrote, ‘I found this a good point after my training in which to look afresh at the idea of “formation” and have certainly had a thought provoking week. Many thanks!!’ Another responded during her retreat before ordination to the priesthood and used the questions for reflection on her ministry and vocation.

Both the second phase responses and the email responses were coded and added to the database. During coding a record of observations and impressions was kept. After the coding of all interviews in each phase, summaries were made of the responses to each interview question for each phase of the investigation. A summary was also produced of the data assigned to each of the 233 codes. Responses to the interview questions in both phase 2 and the email responses were much briefer than the phase 1 interviews. Respondents had the opportunity to spend as much time as they wanted on answering the questions, although this did not necessarily engender carefully crafted sentences. This typifies the difference between personal and online communication.

The next chapter provides a summary of the findings of this empirical study.

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings

Q.1 What words would you use to describe your understanding of formation?

97% of respondents answered this question. The Tag Cloud on page 99 illustrates their responses. The larger the word the more frequently it appears in the answers. This visual representation is very useful for quickly identifying the most prominent terms but caution is required when treating the Tag Cloud as evidence: for instance, the word ‘being’ appears as one of the most frequently used words which might lead to the conclusion that ‘being’ is key to the respondents’ understanding of formation, whereas the word ‘doing’ does not appear at all. The Tag Cloud does not represent linguistic analysis of the data, however, because it fails to distinguish between the frequent use of ‘being’ as a present participle and as a noun; nor does it recognize that ‘grow’, ‘growing’, and ‘growth’ are different forms of the same lexeme. The Tag Cloud provides a striking visual representation of the responses to the first question, but it needs to be accompanied by careful interpretation of the data.

The organic concept of **growth** was the most common metaphor, with 27% of ordinands who answered this question employing it in contexts such as ‘a process of growth’ (R.18, R.19), growing theologically (R.18, R.44), and pastorally and spiritually (R.7, R.11). A higher percentage of staff (37%) referred to growth than students (27%). One respondent understood formation as ‘the opportunity to learn and grow into the person that Christ would want to use to help create his kingdom on earth’ (R.33). 19% of respondents used the word **change**, most often in the phrase ‘process of change’ (R.3, R.6, R.11, R.76; cf. S.6), but also in order to become like Jesus (R.28). Change was considered to be both gradual and life-long (R.30). A similar pattern of responses was encountered during the interviews. The first interview question was ‘What do you understand by the word “formation” in the context of training for ordination?’ An older female interviewee gave a typical answer: ‘When I started I didn’t really know what it was at all, and after three years of STETS I think what I understand now is it’s the way that you change through what you study, through what you learn, through working with other people and through your experiences of the Spirit...’ (I.12).

able academic all allowing already an aware become becoming

been **being** better bit building called can change

changes changing character christ christlike church continues

developing **development**

different discernment discipleship enable encouraging end ends exercise experience

exploring faith fit form **formation** formed forming given

god gradual grow **growing** growth

have his i jesu journey knowledge learning life like

me **ministry** more moulded

moulding **my** one ordination others own person

personal **preparation** priest priesthood

process purpose rather self shape shaped

shaping so spiritual spirituality spiritually than

time tools training transformation **understanding**

us way we what which who would **you** your

26% of those who answered the first question wrote about **development**: a process of development (R.15, R.19, R.76, R.87), and the development of priestly qualities (R.39), priestly character (R.45), godly character (R.60) and ‘unconscious competence’ in the knowledge, skills and experience required for ministry (R.77). Members of staff also referred to the development of character (S.4, S.6). One female respondent clearly articulated what many seemed to be struggling towards: ‘Formation is personal, spiritual and ministerial forming around the deliberate, reflective development of who I have been for the sake of the ministry of who I can be’ (R.63).

17% of respondents used the word **process**. This appeared in the context of change (R.3, R.6, R.11, R.76), growth (R.18, R.19), development (R.15, R.19, R.76, R.87), discernment and discipleship (R.53); preparing an individual for ordination (R.38); and ‘the dynamic process of being moulded, by God, through formal and informal methods, into whatever fits me to serve him in the ministry to which I have been called’ (R.26). 8% used the word **journey** as in ‘journey of discovery’ (R.10) or ‘journey towards integration of self’ (R.52).

Overall, participants were keen to emphasize that formation was not restricted to training for ordination; however only 7% of those responding to this question made the point that formation is **ongoing** (R.6, R.10, R.19, R.29, R.53, R.57) and 5% that it is **lifelong** (R.9, R.30, R.38, R.75). In contrast to this, 79% of interviewees and 46% of email respondents made the point that formation is ongoing. One female interviewee said, ‘it’s not a process that just happens in ordination training, it’s like your spiritual journey... your formation is part of your life’s work too, isn’t it?’ (I.4). A further 29% of interviewees and 8% of email respondents affirmed that formation is lifelong. One female interviewee said, ‘I believe formation is a more ongoing forming process that actually will never end because as Christians, not just in ordination training, we are being formed all the time but perhaps at this stage it is more like a catalyst, is perhaps happening a little bit more speedily’ (I.8). Other participants also recognized that there was a focussed formation during ordination training.

23% of respondents used the language of **shaping**. Two respondents explicitly

mentioned shaping character (R.62, R.42; cf. S.3), whereas the others indicated shaping of the whole person (R.34, R.47). Shaping was for the purpose of ministry (R.6, R.70, R.71, R.74). 12% of respondents used the language of **moulding**: for God's purpose (R.67, R.72), for ministry and leadership (R.43, R.74), 'to a degree' (R.61), 'without being constrained by a mould' (R.66), and into the person of Christ (R.58). 30% of those who used the language of moulding also used that of shaping, whereas 7% preferred **re-shaping** – 'I think formation is more about reshaping or redefining what is already there rather than radically changing or eliminating what is there to produce something totally new i.e. the basic substance stays the same' (R.61; cf. R.19, R.34).

11% of respondents used '**preparation**', many in the context of preparation for ordained ministry (R.15, R.38, R.45, R.51). 14% noted that formation is **for a purpose**: for God's purposes (R.6, R.55, R.67, R.72) or for ministry (R.42, R.54). 24% of respondents used '**ministry**', two people referred to exercising ministry (R.39, R.42), three to their own ministry (R.77, R.63, R.35), and the rest indicating that formation is 'for ministry.' 11% made explicit reference to that ministry being **as a priest**, thus learning to be a priest (R.13, R.21, R.44); formation for, or towards, or in the direction of priesthood (R.28, R.65, R.75); development into the form of a priest (R.47); and the development of priestly qualities (R.39), or priestly character (R.45).

Only 6% of questionnaire respondents understood formation as becoming more like **Christ**. One wrote 'transformation to become more like Christ' (R.14). This perspective was articulated more often in the interviews: an older female interviewee understood formation as 'being, becoming a person who... listens to God and is with God in every aspect of their life in order to be the person God wants them to be for the benefit of everyone else' (I.2).

Different aspects of formation for ordained ministry were referred to: 14% of respondents mentioned **spirituality**, 2% in terms of listening to God (R.1, R.25) but the majority in terms of growth or development in spirituality (R.7, R.11, R.49, R.65, R.68, R.79, R.87). 13% included thinking and **understanding** as part of their formation. These ranged from recognizing their own thinking (R.56) and an

increasing self-understanding (R.11, R.40), to understanding the needs of others (R.5), with the majority simply referring to changing and developing understanding (R.20, R.27, R.44, R.49). 7% referred to the building or shaping of **character** (R.54, R.42, R.62), the development of ‘priestly character’ (R.45), or ‘godly character’ (R.60). 2% mentioned the development of **skills** and another 2% acquiring the tools. The vast majority mentioned more than one aspect of formation and many explicitly stated that formation was ‘A life-shaping rather than a thought-shaping or knowledge-acquiring exercise’ (R.34). This opinion was also articulated in interview: ‘It’s not just training in theology, it’s not just about the academic things, it’s a lot richer than that’ (I.1). 8% of respondents to the questionnaire used the word **training** as in ‘training for ministry’ (R.17, R.44, R.79).

When looking at **the agent of formation**, one person referred to Christ ‘moulding you for ministry’ (R.43), and another mentioned ‘being shaped by God and the church’ (R.46). 7% of respondents to the questionnaire referred to God as the agent of formation: ‘being open to God’ (R.1, R.32), ‘allowing’ God to shape or mould (R.70, R.72), ‘being moulded, by God’ (R.26), or formation being ‘God’s work’ (R.6). 50% of interviewees mentioned that God was the agent of formation. One interviewee understood formation as ‘something God does to us’ although ‘we need to be willing’ to be formed (2I.7). A member of staff wrote that they understood formation as ‘a mutual process of discovering the form that you should take by God’s grace and gifting, as a minister’ (S.1).

In summary, participants articulated an **understanding of formation** in terms of a process of change and development in preparation for ordained ministry. They employed metaphors of shaping, growing, and being on a journey. They emphasized that formation began before ordination training and would continue beyond it. Formation developed their spirituality and understanding but affected the whole person. It was about becoming more like Christ – the vocation of all Christians – only to a greater degree for ministry as a priest. The agent of formation was believed to be God, working with the ordinand’s cooperation, bringing a new perspective on life.

Q.2 Is 'formation' a good word to use in relation to your training for ordained ministry?

80% of respondents answered 'yes.' Formation was considered a good word to use because it 'implies movement,' rather than something 'static or set in stone' (R.10, R.50); formation implies a 'shaping from what already exists' (R.34, R.45, R.63, R.70); formation means a process that is started during training and continues during ministry (R.30, R.46). Formation is 'broader than an imposed obedience' (R.36), it is 'active as well as passive' (R.7; cf. R.62), yet it 'suggests simplicity and humility – a surrendering' (R.85). Two respondents expressed concern that formation should not be to fit into a particular mould (R.19, R.51) and one commented that 'we are being formed for ministry rather than into something rigid' (R.50).

24% of respondents referred to formation being a good word to use because it is a process: of change (R.11, R.23, R.52), of growth (R.36), of moulding, shaping, building (R.38), of learning and development (R.48). Formation was seen as an ongoing process (R.5, R.23, R.30, R.47, R.52), a process of transformation (R.45). 'It is a complex process' (R.82) and 'It indicates an active process towards a new 'shape' ontologically' (R.80). For one person 'It is active; we undertake it, we never simply receive it' (R.77) suggesting that the person needs to positively engage with the process, whereas for another formation is 'something that happens to you, not something you achieve by your own merits' (R. 41). 10% of respondents referred to formation being to, what, or who, God wanted them to be (R.9, R.12, R.19, R.22, R.44, R.53, R.76).

For one respondent, formation is a good word to use because 'It implies transformation without being subsumed' (R.21). For another formation is 'an awesome word, suggesting change and growth into something other than was there originally' (R.33; cf. R.81). Formation 'is a word which covers the breadth and depth of the training for ordained ministry' (R.4), it also 'covers everything that changes me; i.e. not just formal theological training' (R.26; cf. R.83). One respondent commented that 'Formation describes the constructive part of equipping for ministry - however it goes hand in hand with the unmasking and deconstruction element also required' (R.55). Thus the word 'formation' is understood by many of the students to

denote a complex concept.

20% of respondents did *not* think that formation was a good word to use. 29% of them indicated that this was because formation implied closure as in completion or a finished product (R.6, R.29, R.35, R.37, R.68). One objected to formation because it suggested ‘starting from scratch’ (R.61). The alternative words proposed by respondents included ‘development’ (R.61, R.68) as in personal development (R.15), ongoing development (R.16), and ministerial development (R.28, R.60). Some suggested ‘preparation’ (R.29, R.37, R.42). Two suggested ‘transformation’ (R.14, R.15) and two ‘growth’, as in spiritual and theological growth (R.49) and growing (R.64). One proposed ‘shaping, moulding, changing’ (R.6), another ‘journey’ (R.27), and a third suggested ‘self-discovery’ (R.56). All of the proposed alternatives were understood by other participants to be part of the meaning of the word ‘formation’ according to the responses to the first question.

The answers to the second question do not differ in substance from those to the first question. They do however provide more detailed insights into how the word ‘formation’ is understood. They reveal the differing connotations of the word for the various respondents. This is also demonstrated by the responses of the staff, 66% of whom indicated that ‘formation’ is a good word to use. One member of staff affirmed that it ‘captures the spirit of growth, transition of formation’ (S.7), whereas another preferred to use ‘growth’ rather than ‘formation’ (S.2).

Q.3 Which image best captures your view of formation?

9% did not record a response to this question. Two of the eight images suggested in the question – ‘stamping an image on a coin’ and ‘melting wax’ – were not chosen by any respondent and a couple of participants commented ‘none of these.’ The responses are illustrated by the pie chart below. Of those who did respond, by far the most common choice was ‘a potter working clay’ (54%). This may well be because it is a familiar biblical image. The second most popular choice was ‘a gardener tending plants’ (19%), which is akin to the biblical image of the vinedresser. Two non-biblical images each best captured the view of formation of 9% of respondents: ‘a mirror being held up to show a person’s reflection’ and ‘someone unpacking and

repacking a suitcase.’ The remaining two images, both biblical ones, were a crucible (5.1%) and a furnace (3.8%). Whereas holding up a mirror to someone is a fairly gentle image, both of these biblical images carry connotations of damaging heat and force.

Chart 1: Which image best captures your view of formation?

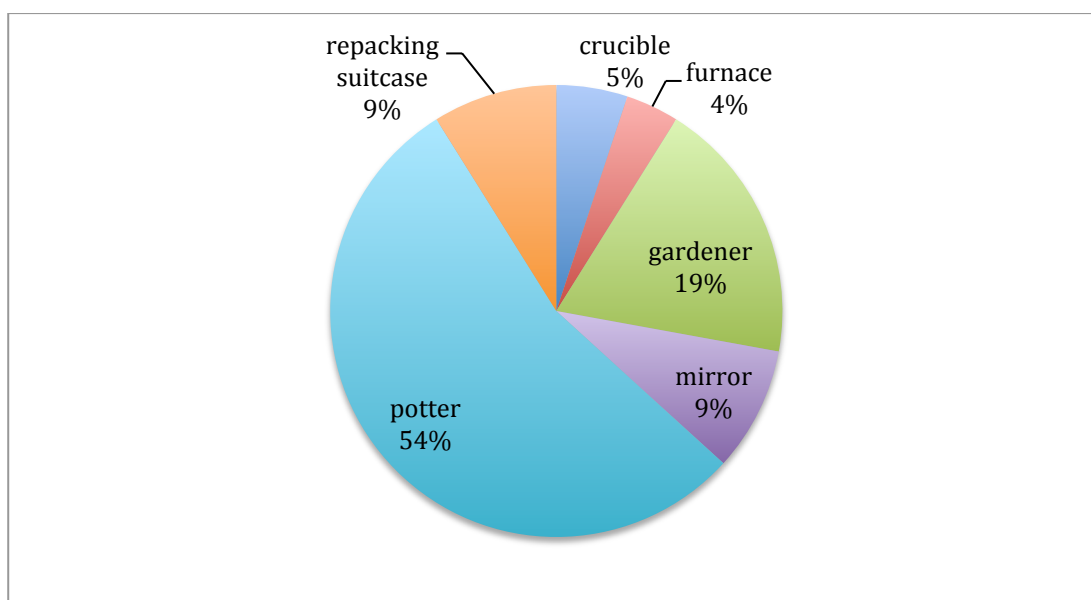
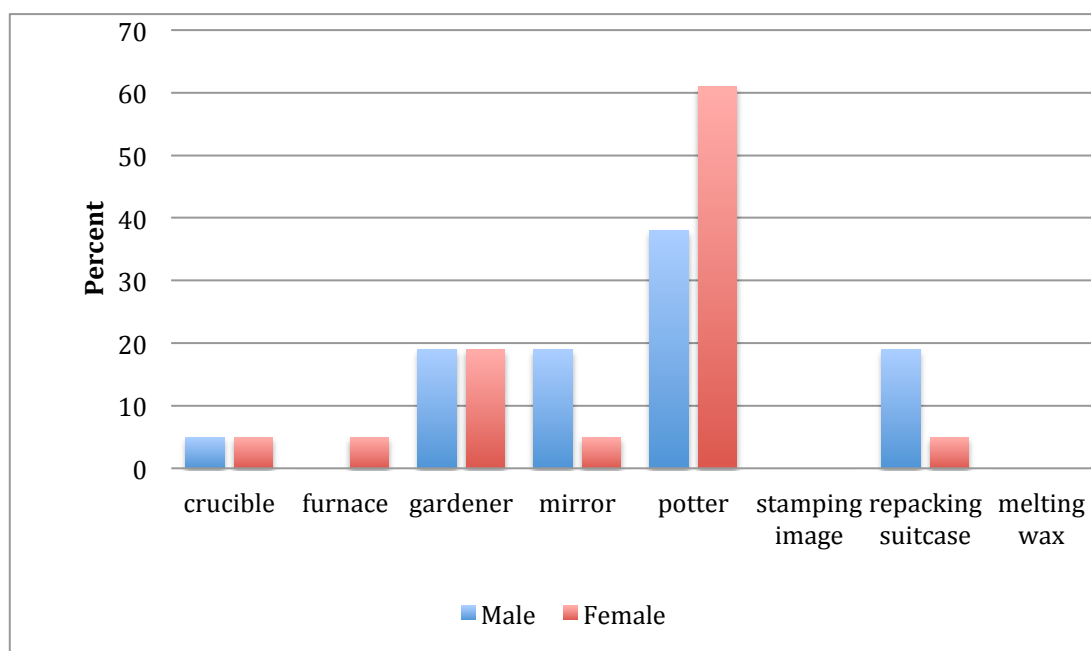


Chart 2 below shows the responses to this question according to gender. What is not so obvious from the chart is the difference in *the pattern of responses* to this question. 16% of male and 7% of female students did not record a response to this question. This appears to be a great difference but it was only four of each gender. Of those who did answer, the potter was the preferred image for 38% of male ordinands; with the gardener, mirror and suitcase each being the best image for 19%, the crucible for 5% and the furnace not appearing at all. In contrast, the potter was the preferred image for 60% of female ordinands, followed by the gardener (19%), with the other four images each being the best image for 5% of female respondents. It appears that female ordinands may view formation as a harsher process than male ordinands. It is interesting to recall that the two images which were preferred by a greater proportion of male ordinands (mirror and suitcase) were suggested by male theological educators.

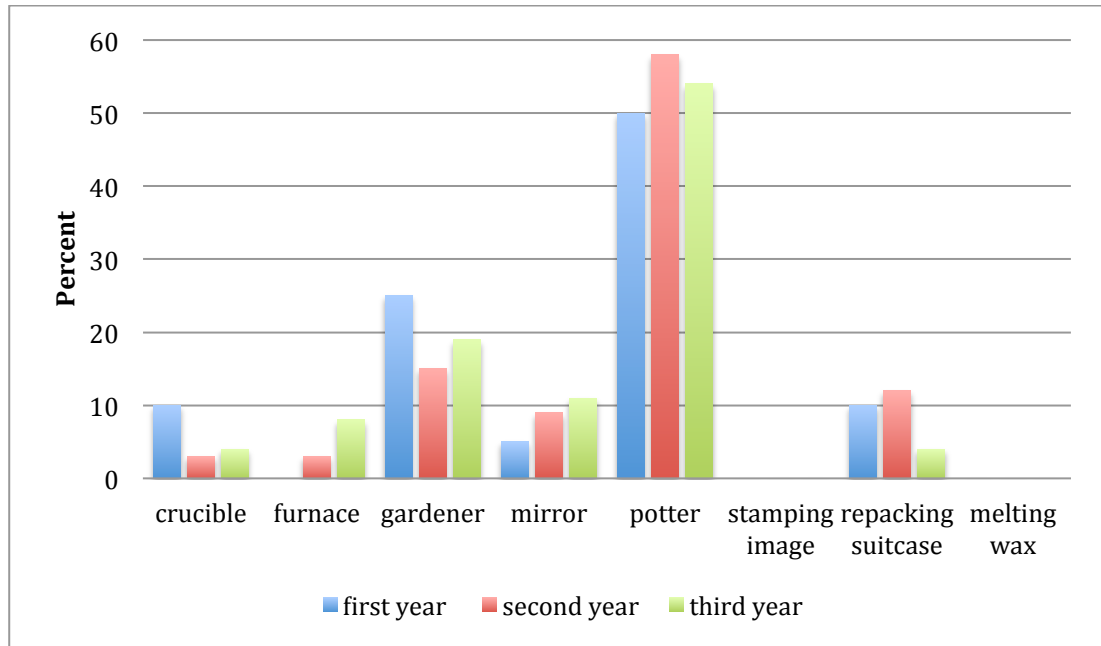
Chart 2: Which image best captures your view of formation?



There was also a difference in the answers of those who responded to this question according to age. Those in the 30-39 age group chose equally between the three images of mirror, potter and repacking the suitcase (33.3% of responses each). A noticeable absence here is the gardener, which was the second most popular image overall. In the other age groups, the potter was by far the most popular (40-49: 63%; 50-59: 52%; 60-69: 53%). The gardener came next, increasing in popularity with the increasing age of the respondents (40-49: 17%; 50-59: 23%; 60-69: 24%). These figures may have more to do with context than theology: the majority of the older students were training for OLM in rural parts of the diocese. In the 40-49 age group the crucible was the best image of formation for 8% of students and furnace, mirror, and repacking the suitcase for 3.6%. Maybe the process of formation impacts more on this age group. In the 50-59 age group repacking the suitcase was more significant (10%), followed by the mirror and furnace (7% each) and lastly the crucible (3%). In the 60-69 age group the mirror was more popular (12%), followed by the crucible and repacking the suitcase (6% each). The furnace did not appear in this age group. Maybe the older students have already experienced many formative experiences and the image of the mirror resonates with them as they reflect on their lives so far.

Chart 3 shows the response to the question according to year group.

Chart 3: Which image best captures your view of formation?



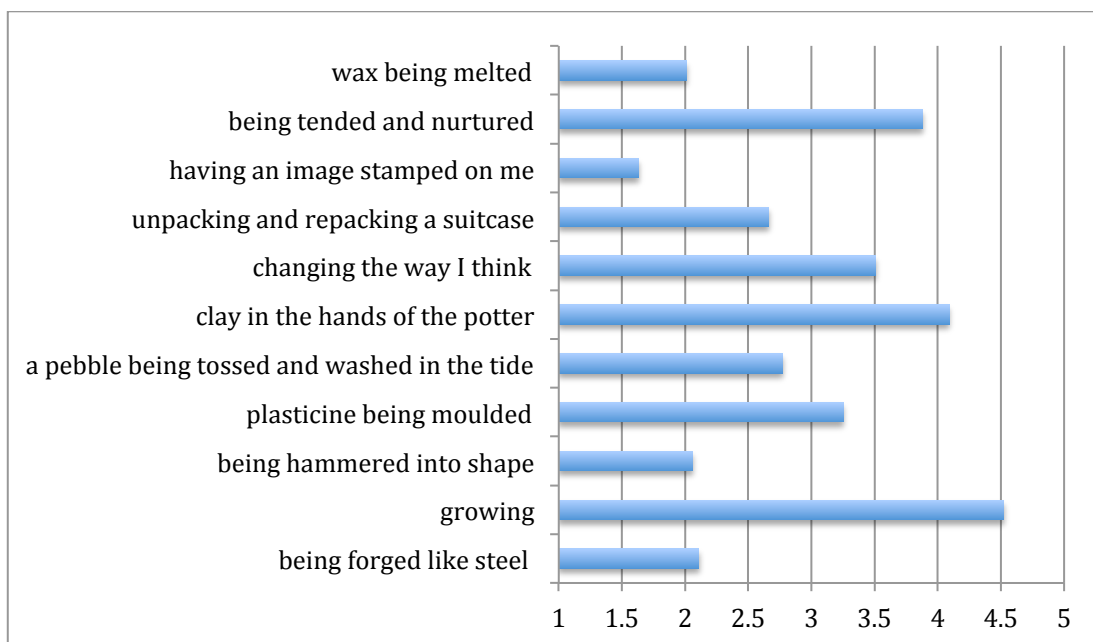
For all year groups the potter is regarded as the best image of formation. For the first year, the potter (50%) is followed by gardener (25%), crucible (10%), repacking the suitcase (10%), and mirror (5%) in order of popularity. The relatively high percentage of people identifying the crucible and repacking the suitcase may be due to adjusting to training for ordination part-time in already busy lives. For the second year students, the potter (58%) is followed by gardener (15%), repacking the suitcase (12%), mirror (9%), and crucible and furnace (3% each). For the third year students, the potter (54%) is followed by gardener (19%), mirror (11%), furnace (8%), and crucible and repacking the suitcase (4% each). It seems that the mirror (first year 5%, second year 9%, third year 11%) and furnace (first year 0%, second year 3%, third year 8%) are the best image for more students as they progress through the course. Maybe these figures relate to students becoming more reflective, on the one hand, and the pressures of completing the course and moving into ordained ministry, on the other hand. For the staff, the gardener and the potter were equally significant (44%), with repacking the suitcase being the only other image that appeared (12%).

During the discussion following presentation of these results to the staff, one member said, ‘I think from our perspective... you maybe do want to be a gardener.’

Q.4 What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?

This question asked participants about their **experience** of formation. The questionnaire included a five point Likert scale with eleven metaphors gleaned from scripture and earlier conversations with theological educators and ordinands in training. 85 ordinands provided a response to this question:

Chart 4: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?
(on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is a lot)



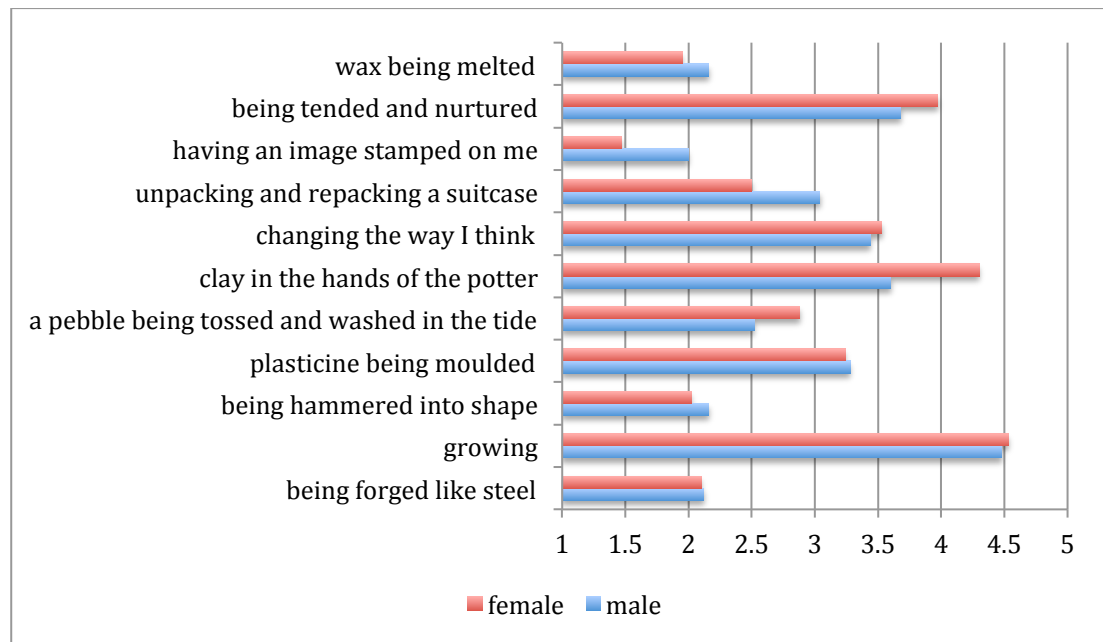
The highest scoring image for describing what *it feels like* to be in a process of formation (experience) was ‘growing’ (mean 4.52), closely followed by ‘clay in the hands of the potter’ (mean 4.09) and ‘being tended and nurtured’ (mean 3.88). All of these are relatively gentle images. ‘Changing the way I think’ was not far behind (mean 3.51). These results contrast with the answers given when participants were asked to identify the image which best captured their *view* (understanding) of formation. In that instance, ‘a potter working clay’ was the preferred image for 54% of participants, followed by ‘a gardener tending plants’ (19%).

Clay, plasticine, and wax are similar substances in that they are pliable and can be shaped and moulded, although ‘wax being melted’ sounds more radical than ‘clay in the hands of the potter.’ The latter is the familiar biblical metaphor and the only one that suggests who might be doing the moulding, which may explain its higher score. The lowest scoring images were the potentially more painful ones: ‘being forged like steel’ (mean 2.11), ‘being hammered into shape’ (mean 2.06), and ‘having an image stamped upon me’ (mean 1.63). This seems to contrast with the interviews, in which many participants commented on how painful formation can be: for instance, one younger female interviewee said, ‘at times it’s been extremely painful... really painful... I don’t think I would describe it as a benign process’ (I.4). This may be because the interview format encouraged participants to reflect more deeply.

Chart 5 analyses the results according to gender:

Chart 5: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?

(on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is a lot)



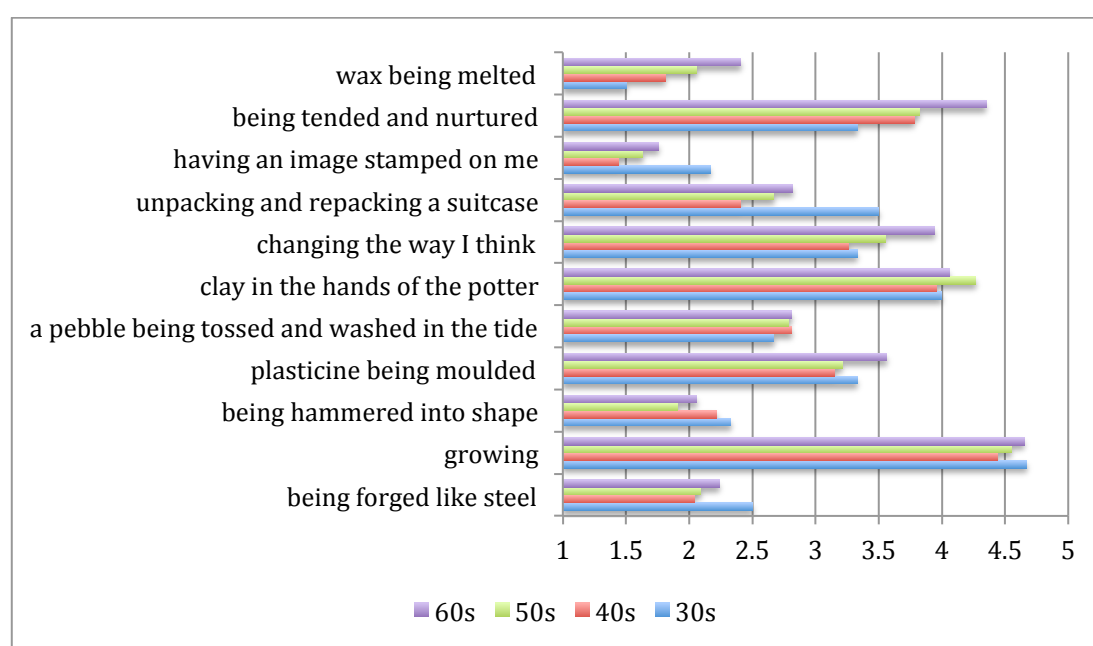
It is noticeable that male respondents gave a higher score for ‘having an image stamped on me’ (male 2; female 1.47), whereas from the answers to the question about their view of formation it might be expected that female respondents would have been more likely to choose this harsh image. Male respondents also gave a

higher score for ‘unpacking and repacking a suitcase’ (male 3.04; female 2.5), which coheres with the pattern of responses to the question about their view of formation, similarly female respondents gave a higher score for ‘clay in the hands of the potter’ (male 3.6; female 4.3), as expected.

Chart 6 analyses the results according to age:

Chart 6: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?

(on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is a lot)



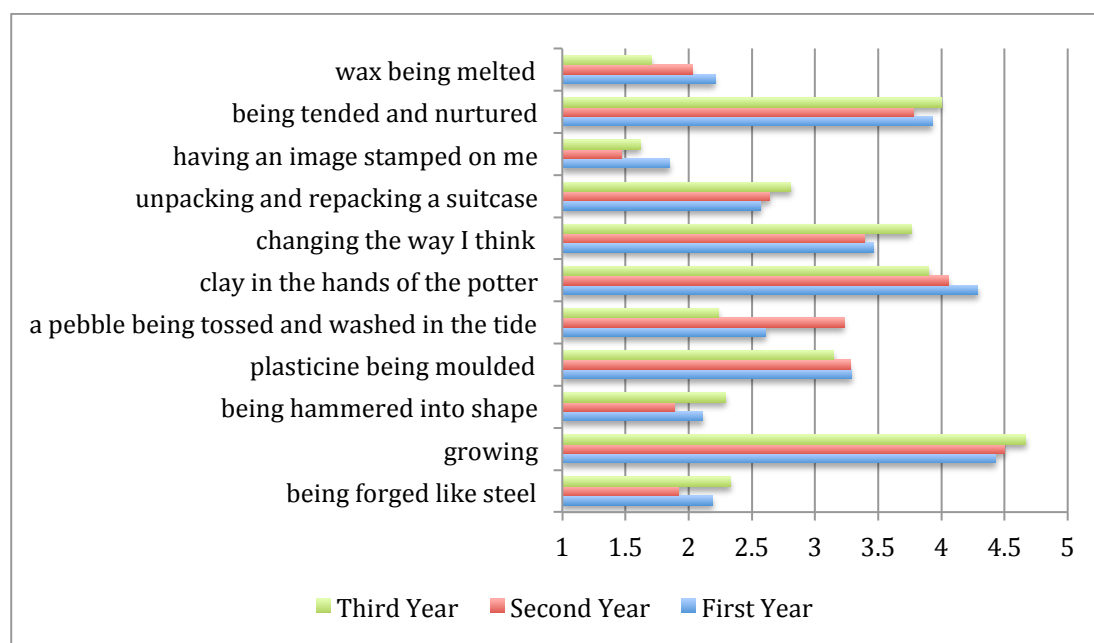
Although the differences are small and have not been shown to be statistically significant, one might note that those in the 30-39 age group chose the potentially more painful images to describe what it feels like to be in a process of formation: ‘being forged like steel’ (mean 2.5; 40-49: 2.04; 50-59: 2.09; 60-69: 2.24), ‘being hammered into shape’ (mean 2.33; 40-49: 2.22; 50-59: 1.91; 60-69: 2.06), ‘having an image stamped on me’ (mean 2.17; 40-49: 1.44; 50-59: 1.63; 60-69: 1.76), and ‘unpacking and repacking a suitcase’ (mean 3.5; 40-49: 2.41; 50-59: 2.67; 60-69: 2.82). This suggests that younger ordinands experience the process of formation more keenly whilst those in the 60-69 age group chose the less severe images of ‘being tended and nurtured’ (mean 4.35; 30-39: 3.33; 40-49: 3.78; 50-59: 3.82), ‘changing the way I think’ (mean 3.94; 30-39: 3.33; 40-49: 3.26; 50-59: 3.55), ‘wax

being melted’ (mean 2.41; 30-39: 1.5; 40-49: 1.81; 50-59: 2.06) and ‘plasticine being moulded’ (mean 3.56; 30-39: 3.33; 40-49: 3.15; 50-59: 3.21). This pattern of responses was also evident in the interviews.

When results are analysed according to year group (Chart 7), there is an interesting pattern in the results for the harshest images: ‘being forged like steel,’ ‘being hammered into shape’ and ‘having an image stamped on me’ are all chosen more by first year and third year ordinands than by second years. Maybe this reflects the adjustments made during the first and third years of training. This leads to the expectation that the second year ordinands would feel more stable; however ‘a pebble being tossed and washed in the tide’ was chosen more by second year students (first year: 2.61; second year: 3.23; third year: 2.24).

Chart 7: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?

(on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is a lot)

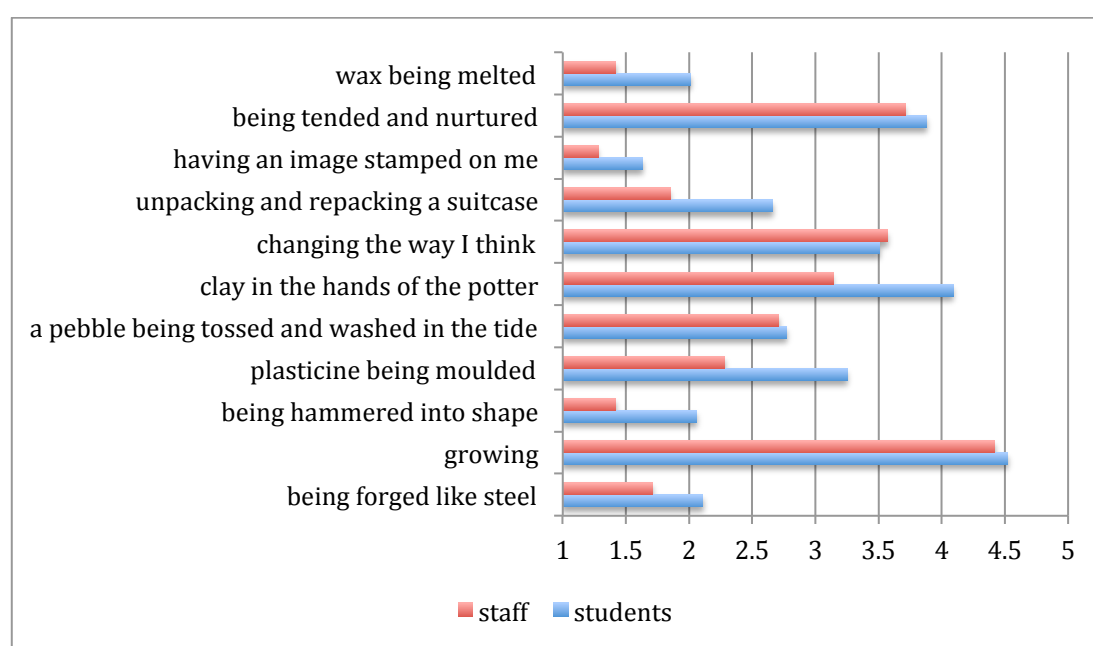


When members of staff were asked the same question (Chart 8), there were some differences in their choices compared to those of the ordinands: ‘clay in the hands of the potter’ (staff 3.14; students 4.09), ‘plasticine being moulded’ (staff 2.28; students 3.25) and ‘unpacking and repacking a suitcase’ (staff 1.85; students 2.66) all scored much higher for students than staff. ‘Changing the way I think’ was the only

metaphor which scored higher for staff (3.57; students 3.51). Staff chose ‘growing’ (mean 4.42), ‘being tended and nurtured’ (mean 3.88), and ‘changing the way I think’ (mean 3.57) as the images which best described what it feels like to be in a process of formation. However, we should be cautious about deriving any more than general conclusions from these data because of the low number of members of staff who responded to this question (7).

Chart 8: What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?

(on a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is a lot)



In both understanding and experiencing formation there is perhaps some evidence for a different pattern of responses according to gender, age, and year group. There are also some differences between the responses of students and staff. These conclusions can only be tentative, however, because the sample was not large enough for tests of significance, hence the use of descriptive statistics.

Q.5 Which other words or images would you use to describe your experience of formation for ordination?

79% of respondents answered this question. This resulted in various suggestions, many of which were similar to the language used to define their understanding of formation.

Growth and **nurture** were expressed as ‘Being held in love while you learn to grow and develop independently. Motherhood’ (R.20), and ‘Gestation’ (R.2). Some respondents used the imagery of a growing plant receiving nutrients and being provided with a supportive structure on which to climb (R.12, R.49, R.68, R.73, cf. R.4, R.41). One provided a different perspective on the plant: ‘Allowing the seed to die and letting God form the plant’ (R.76). **Pruning** was also mentioned: ‘Pruning, fed, supported – in sense of plant supports – trellis doesn’t constrict the plant or force it into a certain shape, but allows growth and development safely’ (R.68; cf. R.69, R.70). The life cycle of a butterfly was employed to express **metamorphosis**: ‘A caterpillar to a butterfly’ (R.12), and ‘A caterpillar going through the chrysalis stage of development’ (R.82).

Shaping and moulding was expressed as ‘Dough in the hands of the baker, sometimes kneaded, sometimes shaped more firmly but with the aim to create something useful, beautiful and with the yeast of the Holy Spirit’ (R.6; cf. R.67, R.86). A few respondents suggested that formation was like **creative** cooking or baking with new ingredients and wondering if the result will be acceptable: ‘Creative cake baking – lots of ingredients being mixed together in different ways, different proportions, no recipe as such but ingredients added as needed, baked to feed as many as possible – but remarkably never fully consumed!’ (R.29; cf. R.7, R.60, R.77).

Some respondents used the metaphor of **journey** (e.g. R.13, R.69). This included reference to a journey of discovery: ‘Exploration, a journey of discovery and adventure which brings new experiences and a wider perspective’ (R.36, cf. R.81) and to pilgrimage, in which ‘the journey is as important as arrival’ (R.65). For some participants their experience of formation had been like a **rollercoaster** ‘long steady

climbs, great heights & profound depths, swerves left & right, feeling disorientated, feeling exhilarated, feeling more confident after the episode' (R.78; cf. R.31; R.69). A slightly gentler version of that was 'A bottle being cast into the sea – sometimes moving backwards, sideways – but always moving towards the sun – sometimes slowly and sometimes very rapidly. Peaks and troughs' (R.10). Another suggestion which also implied not being fully in control of the process was 'Driving without a map (or SATNAV) – sometimes you recognize where you are!' (R.27)

Several of the metaphors concerned **stripping away**: 'layers of an onion being peeled away' (R.26; cf. R.29); 'Stripping, polishing an arrow to allow it to fly through the air accurately' (R.27); a female second year ordinand wrote 'Stripping away and rebuilding in love to be fit for purpose' (R.47). Some of these were to reveal what was within: 'An unveiling of your real self, that only God can unlock' (R.11), 'Tarnished silver being polished to reveal what was always there but hidden' (R.42). One final year female ordinand wrote 'Being revealed as the person God wants me to be, unwrapped or peeled, layer after thin layer, or unfurled like a rose' (R.19; cf. R.57).

The related concept of **refining** also appeared: a final year female ordinand offered 'The gentle abrasion of sand washing in and out of the oyster shell to make the mother of pearl – perhaps rough at times, more scouring, but ultimately the surface will be beautiful, reflective, iridescent in contrast to the other side of the shell which remains dull and worn' (R.32), whereas a first year female ordinand used a harsher metaphor: 'The silversmith watches the process unceasingly, removing impurities until he can see his own reflection – then the silver is refined' (R.53; cf. 86).

Some of those who mentioned images of **deconstruction** combined them with the relevant image of **reconstruction** as in being taken apart and put back together. A first year male ordinand wrote 'A house being demolished (and rebuilt.) A flowing river gathering tributaries, flowing over waterfalls, through lakes, eroding and depositing. The shaping of the landscape – a combination of being built up and worn away – sometimes rapidly, more often slowly' (R.62; cf. R.37, R.51, R.77). One young second year female ordinand clarified:

A lego model – the same bricks but being made into different shapes. Not like a suitcase which is always suitcase-shaped. A bit like the potter but some things are more solid than clay. I might have lost a few pieces along the way and there is the possibility that I will be something different tomorrow – or next year, or in 5 years time. But I am always made of the same bricks. (R.75)

Preparation was present in images of construction such as ‘Digging footings for a building. Laying a foundation’ (R.35), and ‘A house built on a rock’ (R.24).

One younger male respondent used three different powerful metaphors to express different aspects of the experience of being in formation: ‘Being bounced about with others in a confined space so that we can rub off each other. Looking into a divine mirror to develop self-understanding. Climbing a tall tower to achieve a sense of perspective before entering ministry at ground level’ (R.63).

When the participants were invited to offer their own words or images to describe their **experience of formation** for ordination, they repeated many of those included elsewhere in the questionnaire such as growing, shaping, and journey. However, there were some new offerings such as metamorphosis, rollercoaster, pruning, stripping away, refining, deconstruction and reconstruction. These were all discussed more fully during the interviews.

In Part III we move to discussion of the findings of the empirical study in conversation with educational theories.

Part III: Discussion

Chapter 6: Understanding Formation

Formation is Difficult to Define

In the empirical study, participants were asked about their understanding of the word ‘formation’ in the context of training for ordination. Various words and concepts recurred in the responses, however some struggled to articulate an answer. One email respondent wrote, ‘I am not sure that the word has any real meaning for me. It feels nebulous and loaded with expectations (others)’ (E.16); whereas another commented, ‘Still not fully sure, but formation is ongoing anyway’ (E.20); and a third wrote ‘I think formation is something I feel instinctively rather than understand as such’ (E.26). An interviewee who worked in tertiary education said, ‘It’s one of those enigmatic words that kind of defies a simple explanation’, before going on to articulate the three dimensions of the course as outlined in the *Handbook*: ‘the academic side,’ ‘the practical strand,’ and ‘formation, which has always been the one I’ve struggled to describe to people’ (I.10). The ordinands were aware that formation was happening but they struggled to articulate an understanding of it.

In Roman Catholic circles formation usually refers to the disciplined spirituality received by a future priest or member of a religious order, like the Jesuit *Spiritual Exercises*;¹ whereas Baptist educators are concerned with community formation, personal formation (spirituality and ethical behaviour) and professional formation (the tasks of ministry);² and the Church of England report *Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church* suggested that ‘formation’ should be seen as ‘the overarching concept that integrates the person, understanding and competence.’³

In the literature of theological education the language of formation is widely used but rarely defined: Jeremy Worthen noted that ‘formation’ has become ‘something of

¹ George Schnier, ‘Formation as a Unifying Concept of Theological Education’, *Theological Education* 21, no. 2 (1985), 96.

² David Gushee & Walter Jackson (eds.), *Preparing for Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998).

³ *Formation for Ministry*, 29.

a jargon term.’ Generally considered to be a good thing, ‘it is not necessarily all that clear what sort of thing it actually is.’⁴ David Kelsey observed, at a research seminar focussing on the place of character formation in theological education, that the appropriateness of the concept ‘formation’ appeared to be taken for granted and critical scrutiny was only focussed on how to describe *what* is formed, whether that be character, spirit, or soul.⁵

Mudge and Poling define ‘formation’ as ‘the total process by which a given expression of Christian faith – as a company of persons in community in a given setting – comes to be and perdures in the world.’ They point out that ‘Formation may mean the *act* of giving shape to something, or the manner in which it *is* formed: by its past, its circumstances, its inherent structure.’⁶ Thus formation may be a conscious process, as in an explicit, planned programme within a religious community (e.g. the Jesuit *Spiritual Exercises*), or largely unconscious, as when a person imbibes assumptions from the surrounding culture (e.g. adopting the same posture as the rest of the congregation for prayer). As Astley and Savage note, implicit Christian learning often takes place through the ‘hidden curriculum’ of worship and Church life.⁷

Implicit formation is potentially more powerful precisely because it is less conscious (e.g. getting into the habit of genuflecting). Like the person being formed, the theological educator may not be conscious of all the formation that is happening: in his study of supervision in training for the ministry, Fielding observed that ‘A professor’s most important contribution to professional formation is constituted by what in general he is seen to do rather than by the information he conveys.’⁸ This implicit formation, or informal learning, always exists alongside the explicit, planned programme.

⁴ Jeremy Worthen, *Responding to God’s Call: Christian Formation Today* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012), xi.

⁵ Kelsey, ‘Theological Education as Character Formation’, 64.

⁶ Lewis Mudge & James Poling, *Formation and Reflection* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), xvii.

⁷ Jeff Astley & Mark Savage, ‘Music and Christian Learning’, in Jeff Astley, Timothy Hone & Mark Savage (eds.), *Creative Chords* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000), 231-232.

⁸ Charles R. Fielding, *Education for Ministry* (Dayton: American Association of Theological Schools, 1966), 101.

Formation as Enculturation

McKenzie observes that formation is similar to what anthropologists call enculturation:

Enculturation is a process by which a child assimilates the mental, cultural, and moral ‘furniture’ which is in place in a given culture. The person who is enculturated assimilates, acquires, acquiesces; he accepts and receives that which is handed over. Enculturation aims at the development of a homogeneous group; convergent thinking and uniformity are encouraged.⁹

This is illustrated by one of the email respondents who described her experience of being enculturated into the Christian faith:

Outside of the training process, I believe that formation has been lifelong, partly through being brought up in a thoughtful Christian home, partly through regular worship, biblically-based teaching and personal study of the Bible, partly through the influence and example of Christian friends and leaders, partly through the painful, difficult areas of life and always through the work of the Holy Spirit (E.25).

McKenzie is writing about the religious education of adults yet he employs a description of the enculturation of children to illustrate an understanding of formation. When considering adults it might be more accurate to use the term ‘acculturation’ to indicate learning aspects of a new culture, where the learner is expected to accept, acquiesce, and conform to the ways of that culture.

Formation and Critical Education

McKenzie contrasts formation with critical education. He sees formation as a process by which a learner is shaped by a teacher according to some *a priori* model in order to ensure the preservation of what is handed on, and critical education as a process by which teacher and learner engage in a ‘systematic inquiry relating to the issue at hand’ thus assuring growth and development. Whereas formation encourages conformity, critical education fosters individual insight whereby the ‘cultural “furniture” is taken apart and reassembled in new ways.’¹⁰

⁹ Leon McKenzie, *The Religious Education of Adults* (Birmingham, AL: REP, 1982), 64.

¹⁰ McKenzie, *Religious Education*, 64-65.

McKenzie is not alone in expressing concern that formative education excluding critical education is little more than indoctrination.¹¹ However, as Thiessen points out, ‘Christian nurture will of necessity include an initiation / socialization / transmission component’ and as long as this socialization is accompanied by liberation (allowing ‘a person’s growth towards normal rational autonomy’) then there is no danger of indoctrination.¹² Christianity, rather than promoting the radical independent autonomy of the individual, values critical inter-dependence: we are the body of Christ, not all members with the same function, but individually we are members one of another (cf. Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12). In the empirical study, some ordinands were wary of the training institution and feared being formed into a particular mould specified by the Church. One respondent wrote ‘I do wonder what we are being formed into – I hope it isn’t “cloning”’ (R.27). This fear proved to be unfounded, as the respondent was both allowed and encouraged to engage critically with the training.

Westerhoff, a leading proponent of the intentional enculturation approach to Christian education, prefers to use the early Church’s term ‘catechesis’ to refer to the life-long process of becoming more Christian. For him catechesis is the means by which a community of faith transmits, sustains, and deepens Christian perceptions of life; encourages and aids people to experience the presence of God in their lives and within history; and supports and helps people to actualize their human potential for wholeness of life in community by doing the will of God in the world.¹³ In his recognition of the influence of liturgy and ritual in the process of catechesis, Westerhoff actively promotes the *intentional use* of liturgy for Christian education.¹⁴ He believes that ritual participation is the key to formation. This element was noticeably absent from the responses of participants in the empirical study when they were asked about their *understanding* of formation. However, when reflecting on their *experience* of formation, five participants mentioned the significance of saying

¹¹ Cf. Douglas John Hall, ‘Theological Education as Character Formation?’, *Theological Education* 24, Supplement I (1988), 53-54.

¹² Elmer J. Thiessen, ‘Christian Nurture, Indoctrination and Liberal Education’, in Jeff Astley & David Day (eds.), *The Contours of Christian Education* (Great Waking: McCrimmons, 1992), 76.

¹³ John H. Westerhoff, ‘A Catechetical Way of Doing Theology’, in Norma H. Thompson (ed.), *Religious Education and Theology* (Birmingham, AL: REP, 1982), 231.

¹⁴ See Gwen Kennedy Neville & John H. Westerhoff, *Learning through Liturgy* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978).

Morning Prayer or using the Daily Office for their spiritual growth (E.22, E.24, E.27; cf. I.5, I.11) and one email respondent added:

Being an altar server also enabled me to understand how one prays differently when in the sanctuary, made me feel comfortable about being robed and gave me a deeper appreciation of the flow of worship, especially the Eucharist, and appreciate the more ‘theatrical’ aspects of conducting worship (E.24).

Groome has serious problems with Westerhoff’s emphasis on intentional socialization as a way of promoting Christian formation because, ‘in reality... there does not exist the kind of faith communities that can be entrusted with the task of socializing our people into the living of the radical values of the Gospel.’¹⁵ He argues that, ‘what is needed in the midst of our socializing... is some kind of “critical principle” that prevents people from passively imbibing the culture.’¹⁶ In fact, in his later writings, Westerhoff seems to agree: in *Living the Faith Community*, he asserts that catechesis comprises both formation and *education* where formation ‘is an intentional, relational-experiential activity within the life of a faith community that, for example, shapes perceptions of faith, consciousness and character,’ and education ‘is an intentional critical-reflective activity within a community of faith that stimulates within individuals a critical dialogue between their life experience and the tradition.’¹⁷

The valuable conceptual distinction between formative and critical education is not a dichotomy in practice. As McKenzie acknowledges, ‘all critical education is somewhat formative’ in that education conveys values, and ‘all formation is somewhat critical’ in that adults in our western culture today (like the ordinand quoted above) are likely to examine critically what is passed on to them.¹⁸

Astley suggests that ‘formative and critical education really occupy two points on a continuum along which *actual* education programs may be plotted.’ He then adds that ‘we might prefer to think of them as abstractive elements of concrete educative practices,’ arguing that a purely critical education is impossible in practice. He

¹⁵ Thomas H. Groome, ‘The Critical Principle in Christian Education and the Task of Prophecy’, *Religious Education* 72, no. 3 (1977), 263-264.

¹⁶ Groome, ‘Critical Principle’, 265.

¹⁷ John H. Westerhoff, *Living the Faith Community* (New York: Church Publishing, 1985, 2004), 80.

¹⁸ McKenzie, *Religious Education*, 64.

points out that ‘without the long-term and long-lasting processes of formation, a person’s identity and belief system will not be established strongly enough for him to have sufficient confidence in himself to embark on critical education.’¹⁹ Thus he echoes Thiessen’s point that initiation or socialization precedes the liberation of critical reflection.

Astley further declares that formative education should be ‘whole person education’ and can ‘function as a sort of theological/ethical critical education, by forming people in a particular position... which is the base for their critical thinking not only about other cultures, but also about the received Christian tradition and their own (Christian) tradition.’ Thus Astley argues that enculturation can be radical, transformative and liberating.²⁰ He writes as a Christian and argues that the culture into which Christians are formed includes ‘the radical catalyst of the Christian gospel, which itself critiques and may overturn some of the inherited understandings and practices of Christianity as well as many of those espoused by the world.’²¹

Transformative Learning Theory

Sociologist Jack Mezirow (who makes no mention of adherence to any faith) distinguishes between the formative learning of childhood and the transformative learning of adulthood. He states that formative learning occurs during childhood both through socialization and through schooling. He observes that adults today are faced with constant change as they encounter a diversity of beliefs, values, and social practices which cause them to question the perspectives acquired through socialization and schooling, and to seek new ones. Thus Mezirow argues that the formative learning of childhood becomes transformative learning in adulthood.²² He describes ‘perspective transformation’ as involving ‘a sequence of learning activities that begins with a disorienting dilemma and concludes with a changed self-concept that enables reintegration into one’s life context on the basis of conditions

¹⁹ Jeff Astley, *The Philosophy of Christian Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: REP, 1994), 78-81.

²⁰ Astley, *Philosophy*, 93.

²¹ Jeff Astley, ‘Aims and Approaches in Christian Education’, in Jeff Astley (ed.), *Learning in the Way* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000), 19.

²² Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 1-3.

dictated by a new perspective.’²³ There were several examples in the empirical study of ordinands gaining a new perspective through challenges to their own views. One email respondent wrote, ‘studying (some of) Barth and his writings forced me to look at how I saw Jesus and God and Holy Spirit as a trinity’ (E.22).

When they were asked to describe their understanding of formation, only six respondents to the questionnaire (out of 87) used the word ‘transformation.’ Phrases used included ‘from within’ (R.42), ‘to become more like Christ’ (R.17), and ‘for priesthood’ (R.28). Whilst two people thought that ‘transformation’ was a better word to use than ‘formation,’ they did not give reasons for their answers (R.14, R.15). Six others thought that ‘formation’ was a good word to use because it implied transformation (R.17, R.21, R.22, R.45, R.52, R.65). These respondents did make a distinction between an initial formation and the subsequent transformation experienced during training for ordination. They offered ‘a shaping from what already exists’ (R.45) and ‘I think formation is more about reshaping or redefining what is already there rather than radically changing or eliminating what is there to produce something totally new i.e. the basic substance stays the same’ (R.61). These reflections call to mind biblical notions of ‘renewing’ what already exists such as, ‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect’ (Rom. 12:2).

One interviewee said that ‘as I understand it formation is how you move from being a member of the congregation and you morph almost into a leadership role, the way in which that happens, almost imperceptibly and you look back and think, I wasn’t like that a year ago’ (I.14). Later on in the interview, reference was made to the plasticine character Morph who has appeared on TV with Tony Hart since the late 1970s. Morph can change shape to get around obstacles and the interviewee referred to formation being about growing from one thing into another. Another interviewee used the word ‘transformation’ in both the face-to-face interview and the subsequent email response (2I.3) to signify that following a vocation involved a continuous process of change by the Holy Spirit. A third interviewee said that formation during

²³ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 193.

ordination training 'is a process of change' from a lay person to an ordained minister, which requires 'a period of adjustment.' Formation was understood to be about that adjustment and described as 'a period of transition and transformation' (I.6).

The Importance of Convictional Experiences

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning is based on Loder's 'logic of transformation,' a key component of which is 'convictional experiences.' One interviewee recounted, 'I have such a very profound spiritual experience that just completely changed my life and it's no exaggeration to say that the world sort of shifted on its axis and although I looked the same person afterwards, I was completely changed' (I.7). An email respondent wrote about a significant experience whilst sitting in an overseas cathedral, watching people:

The Cathedral is a place of rainbows – not just the stained glass, but prisms set in the windows. Anyway as I watched, I could see the people being touched – caressed? blessed? – by the rainbows as they walked up and down the aisle: many of them completely unaware of it. I saw that we spend much of our lives like that, walking through rainbows of blessing without even noticing their presence, yet touched by God's love all the same (E.26).

According to Loder, these transforming experiences are initiated by Christ, not by any human effort, and they are characterized by a sacrificial love in the one transformed.²⁴

Loder identifies five steps in the logic of transformation:

- 1) *Conflict-in-context* – Mezirow interprets this as 'an apparent rupture in the knowing context'
- 2) *Interlude for scanning* – Mezirow calls this 'searching for possible solutions'
- 3) *Insight felt with intuitive force* – a constructive act of imagination, which Mezirow reverses to 'imagination resulting in insights from intuition'
- 4) *Release and repatterning* – Loder describes this as a release of energy and openness whereas Mezirow glosses it as consciousness

²⁴ James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 185-196.

- 5) *Interpretation and verification* – Mezirow describes this as the interpretation of the imaginative solution into the behavioural and / or symbolic constructed world of the original context.²⁵

Mezirow makes no mention of Loder's emphasis on Christ's involvement in convictional experiences and therefore transformation. He takes the view that 'Learning always involves making a new experience explicit and schematizing, appropriating, and acting upon it.'²⁶ He suggests that sets of habitual expectations or what he terms 'meaning perspectives' govern the activities of perceiving, comprehending and remembering. Reflective learning²⁷ involves the assessment or reassessment of those premises (validity testing) and such learning becomes transformative whenever the assumptions or premises are found to be inadequate. Perspective transformation is never complete until action based upon the transformative insights has been taken.²⁸ In other words, life is not merely *seen* from a new perspective, it is *lived* from that perspective.²⁹

The Importance of Reflection on Experience

Mezirow wants to avoid any suggestion of separating 'the cognitive from the conative and affective dimensions of apperception and the psychological from the cultural in the learning process.' All of these dimensions are integrated in the concept of meaning. Hence his use of the term 'meaning perspective.' He refers to Foucault's view that transformation in knowledge systems are not cognitive but rather emerge 'as the result of changing social interests that locate persons in various roles and distribute authority and responsibility differently.'³⁰ Thus transformational learning might be expected in people training for ordained ministry: preparing for new roles in different social contexts, with a new level of authority and added responsibilities. It is the reflection on experience ('interlude for scanning' according

²⁵ Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 2-4; Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 42.

²⁶ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 11.

²⁷ Following Dewey's definition of reflective thought as 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends.' John Dewey, *How We Think* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1933), 9.

²⁸ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 56.

²⁹ Jack Mezirow, 'Learning to Think Like an Adult' in Jack Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 24.

³⁰ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 42, 57.

to Loder) that is key. Transformative learning involves reflectively transforming beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions.

Brookfield points out that reflection is not by definition critical. He argues that critical thinking ‘involves calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of this critical questioning.’³¹ Thus critical reflection focuses on making explicit and analysing that which was previously implicit and uncritically accepted. For Brookfield, transformative learning has ‘connotations of an epiphanic, or apocalyptic, cognitive event – a shift in the tectonic plates of one’s assumptive clusters.’ He believes that an act of learning can be called transformative only if it involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how someone thinks and acts. He argues that simply having a more informed, nuanced, sophisticated, or deeper understanding of something is not equivalent to transformative learning.³² Thus, according to Brookfield, the study of Barth would not be transformative if it was simply about gaining knowledge. However, if such study caused the ordinand to reconsider who God is, and that critical reflection resulted in addressing God differently in prayer, then it would be transformative.

Formation or Transformation?

Whilst editing this chapter, I wondered whether the participants in the empirical study would understand transformation in this radical way and how they would distinguish it from formation. I contacted the 46 respondents who had given me their email address six years previously, explaining that I was editing the thesis and wanted to check something. Then I asked ‘Please can you send me a sentence or two about your understanding of the difference between formation and transformation in the context of training for ordination.’ 21 people responded (46%), 6 messages bounced (13%) and 19 did not reply (41%).

³¹ Stephen D. Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), 1.

³² Stephen D. Brookfield, ‘Transformative Learning as Ideology Critique’, in Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as Transformation*, 139-140.

48% of those who replied indicated that formation was a gradual building on what was already present, whereas transformation was a change into something else (R.5, R.7, R.14, R.19, R.21, R.42, R.48, R.49, R.71, R.75). One wrote, 'Formation is about an ongoing action of being gently and carefully nurtured and refined into a particular shape that enables the clay to fulfil its true purpose. Transformation speaks of a single event that takes one thing and turns it into something else, e.g. changing a bowl into a vase' (R.19). This illustrates transformation as a marked change of form but not of substance. Two respondents suggested that the difference was about speed with formation as a slower process and transformation more instantaneous (R.16, R.49).

29% of those who responded stated that formation was a process and transformation the outcome (R.3, R.6, R.15, R.16, R.29, R.32). Another person pointed out that 'transformation may be as a consequence of a sustained period of formation' (R.42; cf. R.24). This suggests that the difference between formation and transformation is a difference in degree which only at the end of the spectrum becomes a difference in kind, like a gradual metamorphosis.

For some respondents the difference was in the perspective of the person undergoing formation. One person wrote, 'Transformation is much more subtle – visible to others much more than to oneself until the moment you realise you've not just been trained to be a priest, you actually are one' (R.7), whereas another used the phrase 'lightbulb moments' to describe transformation 'when things began to click into place' (R.29). Other respondents indicated that 'transformation comes when we have glimpses of the process of formation' (R.6; cf. R.66, R.71). This change of perspective comes 'from above,' 'when we have connections with the heavenly world' (R.6). Such comments illustrate Loder's 'insights felt with intuitive force.'

Mezirow recognizes that transformation might be '*epochal*, a sudden, dramatic, reorienting insight' but, unlike Brookfield, he also acknowledges that it might be '*incremental*, involving a progressive series of transformations in related points of view that culminate in a transformation of habit or mind.'³³ Some participants in the

³³ Mezirow, 'Learning to Think Like an Adult', 17-21.

empirical study were able to identify something specific which was formative for them, whereas others reported a more gradual, almost imperceptible transformation. One interviewee said, ‘I haven’t really seen the process so it’s very difficult but I have seen the difference over the time...’ (I.12).

The Process of Formation

Mezirow has identified ten phases of perspective transformation, each of which might be encountered during training for ordination:

1. A disorienting dilemma: a critical incident during a placement in an unfamiliar context;
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame: during worship, or spiritual direction;
3. A critical assessment of assumptions: the encounter in seminar discussions with other ordinands who are on the same journey towards ordination yet hold different views on, for instance, the atonement;
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared: peer group discussions during periods of residence;
5. Explorations of options for new roles, relationships, and actions: through weekly and longer placements in different contexts;
6. Planning a course of action: preparing to lead worship;
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans: the whole of training for ordination;
8. Provisional trying of new roles: practical placements in parishes or hospitals;
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships: this is more likely to happen during the curacy following ordination;
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective.³⁴

Whereas it is possible to identify how each of these ten phases might be encountered during training for ordination, it is more difficult to discern whether ordinands go through each phase in turn. However, as mentioned in chapter 5, some participants

³⁴ Mezirow, ‘Learning’, 22; Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 168-169.

described their *experience* of formation in terms of deconstruction and reconstruction.³⁵ Mezirow's ten phases might be simplified into: disorientation; critical reflection (which includes examination of both emotional response and underlying assumptions); search for an alternative perspective (which results in a new way of acting); and reintegration. This coheres with Brookfield's description of the process of becoming a critical thinker:

- 1) Trigger event – something unexpected prompts a sense of inner discomfort and discrepancy;
- 2) Appraisal – a period of self-scrutiny and appraisal of the situation;
- 3) Exploration – the search for new ways of explaining the discrepancies;
- 4) Developing alternative perspectives – ways of thinking and acting arise out of exploring the alternatives;
- 5) Integration – finding ways to integrate the new ways of thinking and living into lives.³⁶

As some of the participants reported, formation is not always a linear process, sometimes it is cyclical (e.g. R.29), therefore perspective transformation would be better illustrated as a circle or even a spiral rather than as a list of steps or phases.³⁷

Formation is Life-Changing

Mezirow suggests that transformative learning may occur through objective or subjective reframing. *Objective reframing* involves critical reflection on the assumptions of others encountered in a narrative or in task-orientated problem solving, such as 'action-learning.' *Subjective reframing* involves critical self-reflection of one's own assumptions about a narrative or an organization, or feelings and interpersonal relations, or the ways someone learns.³⁸ As indicated above, Brookfield would only consider subjective reframing with its critical self-reflection to be transformational learning. One example of subjective reframing was an ordinand who not only saw the value of hospital chaplaincy but also saw that she

³⁵ Cf. p.114 above.

³⁶ Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers*, 26-27.

³⁷ See Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology* (London: Mowbray, 2009), 19-27.

³⁸ Mezirow, 'Learning', 23.

could do it, which was a revelation to her and demonstrates that she had gained a new perspective on herself (I.12).

In the empirical study, many respondents to the questionnaire explicitly stated that formation was ‘a life-shaping rather than a thought-shaping or knowledge-acquiring exercise’ (R.34). One male respondent wrote, ‘Formation for me is the internal reorientation of my very being. It is like the “plate tectonics of the soul”: unstoppable, somehow dramatic, often imperceptible but the principal factor shaping my character’ (R.62). One interviewee said of formation that ‘it’s the change that comes about in you, development of skills, change in character, the increase in spirituality, the change to the way you live your life, and in many ways the change in which you think about life’ (I.3). Another interviewee said, ‘it’s something about change... it’s about the way I feel myself to be changing, in terms of my faith, my identity and my experience of myself and my sense of what I might do practically, the vocational side of it’ (I.10).

Mezirow recognizes that not all learning is transformative,³⁹ but he claims that the likelihood of transformation is greater if the marginal situation (Loder’s ‘context-in-conflict’) is entered voluntarily and he believes that the most powerful motivator to learn is identifying with a cause larger than oneself.⁴⁰ This would suggest that people who have offered themselves to train for ordination and who identify with the Christian faith would be more likely to be transformed. However, as Mezirow points out, ‘Transformative learning, especially when it involves subjective reframing, is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions undergirding our ideas and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change.’⁴¹ An individual’s faith is very precious and any critical reflection on their assumptions about it may be perceived as a personal threat and incur resistance. In the empirical study the intensity of the emotional experience was often evident when participants were asked to articulate their feelings about their experience of formation during ordination training. This is explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

³⁹ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 223.

⁴⁰ Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 194.

⁴¹ Mezirow, ‘Learning’, 6-7.

A Critique of Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow developed his theory of transformative learning from his observations of mature women returning to education. The participants in the empirical study were all mature students returning to education after a gap of some years, in some cases decades, moreover two thirds of the participants were female. It should not therefore be surprising that this theory should resonate with the findings of the empirical study. However, there are aspects of his theory where there is less alignment: for instance, Mezirow sees formation in childhood as socialization and transformation in adulthood as emancipation (following Freire's call for a 'critical consciousness').⁴² Thus the goal of transformative education is individuation, 'the development of the person as separate from the collective.'⁴³ In the empirical study, for one female ordinand the first year of training was about *both* individuation *and* increasing dependence on God. She said that formation was 'about growing up, becoming a grown up, moving through childhood to adolescence and growing up even in a year, becoming dependent, more dependent on God and more independent of other people.' She spoke about how 'this year has been about separating off and loss but standing independently and reflecting on what is there but not knowing the future' (I.2). There is a danger that individuation is understood as independence or separation from others. However, in the context of training for ordination students should become increasingly aware of themselves as individuals and of their membership of the body of Christ. As Parks Daloz notes,

'Emancipatory learning' is not about *escape from* but rather about a deeper *immersion into* the rough-and-tumble of human relationship. An education that reveals and enhances our radical interdependence with all creation frees us from a 'false consciousness' of our separateness into a richer understanding of our underlying relatedness.⁴⁴

Brookfield suggests that a person needs others to help them break out of their framework of interpretation as other people reflect a person's point of view back to

⁴² Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2nd ed. 1972).

⁴³ Patricia Cranton, 'Individual Differences and Transformative Learning,' in Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as Transformation*, 181.

⁴⁴ Laurent A. Parks Daloz, 'Transformative Learning for the Common Good', in Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as Transformation*, 120.

them and act as a mirror from a different vantage point.⁴⁵ One of the images of formation used in the questionnaire was a mirror (following a comment from a male theological educator, who suggested in conversation that formation was about holding up a mirror to ordinands.) Parks Daloz argues that engagement with others plays a key role in transformation through an incremental process of differentiation and integration. This requires the presence of the other, reflective discourse, a mentoring community and opportunities for committed action.⁴⁶ All of these elements are present in training for ordination and the role they played in the formation of the participants is discussed in the next chapter.

Taylor has analyzed the research on transformative learning theory and offers two significant findings: first, that without expression and recognition of their feelings participants will not engage in their new reality, leave behind past resentment, and begin critical reflection; second, that the journey of transformation is less linear in nature than recursive, such that several of Mezirow's ten phases are repeated as a person is transformed.⁴⁷ Taylor asserts that 'it is quite clear that affective learning plays a primary role in the fostering of critical reflection. Furthermore, it is our very emotions and feelings that not only provide the impetus for us to critically reflect, but often provide the gist of which to reflect deeply.' In this he reiterates the importance of a mentoring community: 'It is through building trusting relationships that learners develop the necessary openness and confidence to deal with learning on an affective level, which is essential for managing the threatening and emotionally charged experience of transformation.'⁴⁸ This observation highlights the importance for formation of time spent building relationships in a residential community during training for ordination.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning could be criticized for its emphasis on individualism and critical reflection, both of which are products of a Western post-Enlightenment culture. Indeed individualism is perpetuated by the way in which ordinands are selected for training and assessed during that training. However, once

⁴⁵ Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers*, 29.

⁴⁶ Daloz, 'Transformative Learning', 112; cf. Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 49.

⁴⁷ Edward W. Taylor, 'Analyzing Research on Transformative Learning Theory', in Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as Transformation*, 291.

⁴⁸ Taylor, 'Analyzing Research', 305-308.

participants in the empirical study were ordained and serving their Title Posts in parishes, their perspective broadened, as illustrated by one of the interviewees who said during training that formation is ‘a process of change, instilling some notions of what faith and leadership are about in the context of the Church of England’ (I.6), then two years later wrote, ‘It is also a process of becoming enculturated, in the sense of learning how groups of people i.e., congregations share understandings and practices, and so learning the boundaries and accepted norms’ (2I.6). More of the email respondents, who were already ordained, made reference to a broader purpose of formation: ‘in order to serve God in his church’ (E.17), ‘to sustain us and enable us to cope with the ambiguities and demands of ministry’ (E.22), ‘to serve in ordained ministry’ (E.24).

Formation through Relationship with God

When looking at understanding formation in the empirical study, the one key factor missing from Mezirow’s theory and frequently mentioned by participants is the involvement of God: one interviewee stressed in the second response that formation ‘accompanies God’s call,’ understanding formation as ‘the progressive conforming of the self to the pull of God’ always within the context of God’s love and grace (2I.10). Another interviewee said ‘God will form us’ and ‘God continues to form us throughout our lives’ (I.7). In understanding formation as ‘the continued development of the sense of calling along with the equipping and empowering to be true to that calling,’ one email respondent wrote that it is ‘easing yourself into the perfectly shaped niche that God has formed for you’ (E.20). This sentiment was echoed in ‘I have been formed into the person I was always meant to be’ (E.26). One respondent to the questionnaire stated ‘I am being formed into a truer reflection of the person God has made me to be’ (R.19). These examples could be understood as descriptions of individuation yet they are articulated in terms of a relationship with God.

In a book aimed at those training for ordination in the Church of England, Croft and Walton state that Christian formation ‘is a forming by relationship which reflects both the character of the one who forms, and the uniqueness, individuality and

choices of those who are formed.⁴⁹ Forming by relationship was evident in the empirical study. Respondents wanted to emphasize that formation was a process of growth in which ‘the person being “formed” is intimately involved’ (R.36) and even ‘co-creating with God’ (R.59). Formation was understood to be ‘broader than imposed obedience’ (R.46), ‘active as well as passive’ (R.7; cf. R.62), yet suggesting simplicity and humility – a surrendering (R.85). Thus formation happens when the individual is actively engaged in the process, when the experience is embraced. As Niebuhr points out, ‘If students are not personally involved in the study of theology they are not yet studying theology at all but some auxiliary science such as the history of ideas or ancient documents.’⁵⁰

Formation through Engagement with Theology

Systematic theologian Ellen Charry employs the concept of engaged knowledge to argue that the study of doctrine should be formative as it was considered to be in the patristic age.⁵¹ She argues that ‘the classic theologians based their understanding of human excellence on knowing and loving God, the imitation of or assimilation to whom brings proper human dignity and flourishing.’⁵² Educator Parker Palmer also suggests a return to monastic tradition in order to recover the spiritual disciplines of the study of sacred texts, the practice of prayer and contemplation, and the gathered life of the community itself.⁵³ In *What to Expect in Seminary*, Virginia Cetuk challenges students to embrace formation, to see each aspect of their theological education as something that contributes to spiritual formation and reliance on God.⁵⁴

When asked about the level of engagement with their training, the majority of participants in the empirical study reported that they put most energy into the academic work (I.3, I.4, I.5, I.9, I.11, I.12, I.13, I.14, 2I.14, E.15, E.17, E.22, E.23). In this context four of them specifically mentioned writing assignments (I.3, I.4,

⁴⁹ Croft & Walton, *Learning for Ministry*, 69.

⁵⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of The Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 118.

⁵¹ Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

⁵² Charry, *Renewing Minds*, 18.

⁵³ Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 17.

⁵⁴ Cetuk, *What to Expect in Seminary*, 12.

E.22, E.23). One female email participant wrote, ‘Essay writing is where I have focused my efforts and energies and this is where I have done most of my learning. This is also the assessed part of the course on which I pass or fail – so in the limited time I have I have had to focus on this aspect’ (E.23; cf. I.3). Another stated, ‘after the relationships I was forming, I probably put the most energy into the academic work’ (E.25).

A first year male interviewee said that he’d put a lot of energy into the academic training ‘but the thing that’s consumed me most has been the whole experience of... encountering people from such different backgrounds and styles and approaches and perspectives’ (I.10). Five respondents declared that they had put most energy into the practical elements of training (I.6, I.8, 2I.7, 2I.11, E.19). One of them said, ‘I hope I’ve put my all into as much of it as I possibly could... I’ve tried to balance myself’ (I.8; cf. I.9). Four more participants stated that they had tried to put as much energy and enthusiasm into everything across the board (I.1, I.2, I.7, E.27).

Cetuk concludes that,

Simply put, formation requires a person to die to the self; to give up former ways of being and thinking and believing and relating; to renegotiate one’s belief systems about oneself and the world; to replace old ways of being with new, more sophisticated and lasting ways of being that are more appropriate to the new role in society that one is preparing to take.⁵⁵

Formation into the Likeness of Christ

Some of the participants in the empirical study wrote about formation in terms of new ways of being. For instance, one of the email respondents, already ordained, understood formation as ‘the assisted development of that Christlike character and spiritual wisdom which will enable the ordained person to minister faithfully to his/her flock, with integrity and authenticity’ (E.25; cf. E.24). Another understood formation as ‘the development of good habits and attitudes’ (E.15). Such comments illustrate Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, which he invokes to make sense of the formative power of cultural practices. Bourdieu argues that knowledge is constructed, and that ‘the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring

⁵⁵ Cetuk, *What to Expect in Seminary*, 187.

dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and which is always oriented towards practical functions.⁵⁶ Learned and acquired through practice, *habitus* is ‘embodied history, internalized as a second nature.’ It functions as ‘accumulated capital’ and is ‘spontaneity without consciousness or will.’⁵⁷ According to *Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church*, the purpose of ministerial education is ‘to establish the patterns of learning, piety and competence which will sustain an appetite for continued growth.’⁵⁸ Thus ordinands are urged to get into the habit of saying the Daily Office, whether that is through attending the residential college chapel, or meeting with a small group in a local church, so that it might become second nature to them and sustain them through lifelong ministry.

Rather than seeing such formation as the prerogative of those training for ordination, Heywood views the Christian faith itself as a *habitus*:

Christian growth does not consist of learning to look *at* the truths of Christian faith so as to reproduce them in sermons, Bible study groups and conversations with Christian friends but in learning to look at the world *through the perspective* of those truths so that they become part of the way we think about the world and respond to it. Christian faith thus becomes a *habitus* or wisdom for living consisting of tacit rather than explicit knowledge.⁵⁹

In doing so, he refers to Edward Farley’s *Theologia*. However, Farley makes a distinction between the *habitus* of faith and theological understanding, or *theologia*. He sees *theologia* as rooted in and rising out of faith, which ‘describes the way in which the human being lives in and toward God and the world under the impact of redemption.’ For Farley, faith is always located within a particular concrete social and historical context. It is ‘an opening onto the world’, which is both intuitive and reflective. He distinguishes between this ‘prereflective insightfulness,’ which he calls ‘belief-ful knowing,’ and *theologia*, which results from the deliberate process of critical reflection on faith.⁶⁰ Thus theological understanding, or *theologia*, is both *habitus* and a dialectical activity. Farley argues that whereas critical reflection on

⁵⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 52.

⁵⁷ Bourdieu, *Logic*, 56.

⁵⁸ *Formation for Ministry*, 29.

⁵⁹ David Heywood, *Divine Revelation and Human Learning* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 173.

⁶⁰ Farley, *Theologia*, 156-157.

faith can be taught, the *habitus* of sapiential knowledge cannot be taught directly but may be nurtured. *Theologia*, like faith itself, forms within a culture.⁶¹

Smith and Smith build on both Bourdieu's logic of practice and MacIntyre's work on moral education⁶² in asserting that 'any education worthy of the name has to be formative, and that formation happens only through practices which inscribe a *habitus* – an orientation and inclination toward the world, aimed at a specific *telos*.'⁶³ James Smith identifies the *telos* of formation as 'the shape of the coming kingdom' and Wolterstorff as 'the totality of life in a kingdom.'⁶⁴ Whereas Smith considers the formation of a people, the empirical study examined the formation of individuals for ordained ministry and their responses reflect that individual *telos* which is most often expressed as 'becoming more like Christ.'

Reflecting on the interview transcript two years later, one person wrote that 'the only words I would like to add are about becoming more Christ-like in every way' (2I.2; cf. E.22), another added 'like all Christians it is moving closer to the mind of Christ' (2I.4). Likewise, several respondents to the questionnaire understood formation as becoming more like Christ (R.9, R.14, R.28, R.40, R.58). One person preferred the word 'discipleship' to 'formation' because it meant 'being formed into the image & likeness of Christ' (R.69). One interviewee hoped 'that I am being transformed daily into the likeness of Christ' (I.9), whereas another one pointed out that ordinands were being changed 'not just to become more like Christ because that's what Christians do anyway, but I think for ministry it's about thinking differently. I think you view the world quite differently as a Christian minister than you do as just a Christian because it's about... holding people?' (I.4). It is the change of perspective and world-view expressed by Interviewee 4 that is significant.

Astley argues that Christian education involves a change of perspective, a correction of vision, by forming skills, attitudes and a framework of belief that enable people to

⁶¹ Farley, *Theologia*, 178-181; cf. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 103-105.

⁶² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1985).

⁶³ David I. Smith & James K.A. Smith (eds.), *Teaching and Christian Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 9.

⁶⁴ James K.A. Smith, 'Keeping Time in the Social Sciences', in Smith & Smith, *Teaching and Christian Practices*, 140; Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, *Educating for Life*, eds. Gloria Goris Stronks & Clarence W. Joldersma (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 66.

see the point of Christianity. He agrees with Heywood that Christian growth consists of ‘learning to look at the world through the perspective’ of Christian truths. The Christian learner needs to ‘see with the eyes of faith.’ Thus studying theology should cause ordinands to see things in a new way, they should acquire ‘a Christian vision,’ because theology is ‘spectacles for interpreting the world’ rather than simply knowledge about God. According to Astley, this new form of vision should be the proper outcome of theological reflection.⁶⁵ Cetuk prefers the language of reframing: ‘Faith in God through Christ enables one to see anew the world and the circumstances of one’s life; *they are reframed*.’⁶⁶

In the context of training for ordination, formation is not limited to seeing from a different perspective, it also involves living differently. As Percy states, ‘Formation comes through the dynamic interaction between faith and culture; between theology and context (environment); between reality and spirituality; between the prompting of the individual and the discernment of the community... it is a correlative process.’⁶⁷ Working within the Roman Catholic Jesuit tradition, Schnier defines formation as ‘the development of that creative ability, indicated at least in part by the term “creative imagination” which issues in the activity of thinking, speaking, and acting which attempts the construction of concepts and language for the self-world-God relations.’⁶⁸ Foster *et al.* also argue that ‘Learning in the formative sense is a process by which the student becomes a certain kind of thinking, feeling, and acting being.’⁶⁹ They employ Dykstra’s concept of ‘the pastoral imagination’ which he defines as ‘a way of seeing into and interpreting the world which shapes everything one thinks and does.’⁷⁰ Dykstra believes that pastoral imagination requires ‘a peculiar intelligence that involves specific capacities of mind, spirit, and action that are specific to pastoral ministry itself.’⁷¹ He likens this to ‘the legal mind’ and ‘artistic imagination’ but emphasizes that Christian practices are unique in that they

⁶⁵ Jeff Astley, ‘Ordinary Theology and the Learning Conversation with Academic Theology’, in Jeff Astley & Leslie J. Francis (eds.), *Exploring Ordinary Theology*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 48-51; cf. Stanley Hauerwas with Brian Goldstone, ‘Disciplined Seeing’, in Stanley Hauerwas, *Learning to Speak Christian* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 33-60.

⁶⁶ Cetuk, *What to Expect in Seminary*, 39.

⁶⁷ Percy, *Clergy*, 157-158.

⁶⁸ Schnier, ‘Formation’, 100.

⁶⁹ Foster, Dahill, Golemon & Tolentino, *Educating Clergy*, 10.

⁷⁰ Craig Dykstra, ‘The Pastoral Imagination’, *Initiatives in Religion* 9, no. 1 (2001), 1.

⁷¹ Dykstra, ‘Pastoral Imagination’, 1.

are nothing less than ‘habitations of the Spirit.’⁷² This change of perspective leading to a new way of living is called for in Romans chapter 12.

Conclusion

Any understanding of formation for ordained ministry must recognize that it takes place within the context of relationships – relationship with God (who is often perceived as the potter with the ordinand as the clay), and relationships within the community of the training institution. Formation involves socialization into this new community with a developing interdependence. The study of academic theology within this community entails encountering different people, opinions and ideas. Worshipping together within this community introduces new spiritual practices. Placements give ordinands the opportunity to discover God in unfamiliar contexts as they begin to exercise ministry in their new role as trainee clergy. Such experiences invariably challenge ordinands to reconsider their own perspectives. This may happen suddenly through a particular experience or gradually over time. When ordinands embrace the experience (however painful) and seek God in the midst of it, then they may be transformed. That process involves re-examining feelings, thoughts, and actions in discovering and adopting a new perspective. The resultant change will be evident not only in their way of seeing God and the world, but also in their behaviour towards God and the world. It should reflect an increasing likeness to Christ as they grow into the role of ordained ministers.

⁷² Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith* (Louisville: WJKP, 2005), 63.

Chapter 7: Experiencing Formation

One of the key aims of this thesis is to listen to the voices of those in training for ordained ministry in order to learn from their experiences of formation. The responses may then inform best practice in facilitating formation in future patterns of training.

Formation is Challenging and Painful

When interviewees were asked to describe their experience of formation and to articulate what it had felt like, the word they used most often in their answers was ‘challenging.’ 57% of interviewees said that they found formation challenging, most of them referring to the whole experience of training for ordination (I.3, I.6, I.7, I.8, I.11, I.14), whereas two specifically mentioned the academic work and encountering other ideas which made them look again at their own perspectives (I.1, I.9). One male interviewee in his final year of training articulated this experience clearly:

It’s felt quite challenging... the sheer physical demands of the time required for it and having to grapple with new ideas. It’s been challenging in other ways: as you come across these other ideas you’re almost compelled to look at yourself again inside and understand a bit more about where you’re coming from, what shaped you, why do I actually believe that? (I.1; cf. I.9)

54% of the email respondents also admitted to finding formation challenging. One female final year ordinand wrote, ‘My character is changing as I respond to the changes and the challenges. My mind has definitely been changed – the poor brain cell [*sic*] reels from the challenge of academic theology’ (E.26). Some participants were challenged by the whole experience (E.18, E.24), and others by their interactions with particular individuals, or within groups (E.19, E.21, E.22, E.27).

Over half of all participants reported experiencing formation as challenging. They found such challenge disturbing, especially when it caused them to reconsider their own perspectives, and more than a third of them described formation as painful.

50% of interviewees mentioned feeling uncomfortable during their formation (I.2,

I.3, I.5, I.7, I.9, I.10, I.14). Some talked about being ‘out of their comfort zone.’ One first year male ordinand used such language five times to describe ‘a lot of that wrestling and soul-searching and discomfort that comes from exploring yourself and your relations with others and your identity as a person’ (I.10). There were many other examples of the intensely threatening emotional experience of subjective reframing reported by Mezirow:¹ 31% of email respondents, all female, used the word ‘painful’ to describe their experience of formation (E.22, E.25, E.26, E.27). One final year ordinand wrote, ‘My first instinct was to say “painful.” I have had to be de-formed from the person I was before; have the layers peeled away (like wallpaper in an old house) to get to what is underneath’ (E.26), whereas another in ministry replied, ‘It has felt like going through the mill, of looking at my person and turning it inside out. It has felt like forging something that is painful to start with (squashed or melted) but you hope the end product will last’ (E.22).

36% of interviewees also used the language of pain (I.4, I.7, I.9, I.10, I.13), three of them employing it again in their responses two years later (2I.4, 2I.7, 2I.10). For some of these people particular experiences in encountering others during training had been very painful (I.4, I.13). Whereas one male interviewee spoke about the pain of formation, only female participants used the language of vulnerability (I.7, 2I.9, E.21, E.27, R.22). A second year female ordinand employed the metaphor of a rollercoaster to describe the profound pain of no longer knowing who God is:

certainly this middle year there were six months where it just felt I’d been deconstructed, kind of levelled, layers taken away and it just felt very raw... normally if you’re feeling uncomfortable, painful, anxious a place I would turn to would be God but it felt like I didn’t know where God was because I wasn’t quite sure who God was (I.9; cf. E.18).

Two years later she wrote, ‘Interestingly I wouldn’t use the expression of a rollercoaster this time! Not that it hasn’t been like one, but because certainly thus far it feels that I have been steadily sustained by God, so even when the experiences have ranged from the bizarre to the desperate, I have always felt upheld by God’ (2I.9).

The language of ‘being stripped bare’ (E.23) and ‘having the layers peeled away’ (E.26, I.9, I.10, I.11) was surprisingly common throughout the empirical study.

¹ Mezirow, ‘Learning’, 6-7.

However, once participants had settled into ordained ministry, as with the example above, there is a sense of the pruning bringing forth new growth. Two years after the interviews a female respondent wrote, ‘formation since ordination feels like more of the same kind of peeling away to find the real me in God’s eyes, but there’s also very much a sense of new growth - perhaps we should talk daffodil bulbs instead of onions...’ (2I.11; cf. R.19). It is noticeable that it is only after two years that participants report a return to an awareness of security in God and a sense of new growth. This suggests that formation for ordained ministry requires at least two years.

Not all experience of formation was negative: many of those who said that formation was painful also said that it was ‘tremendous’ and ‘a great privilege’ (I.3; cf. I.5, I.9, I.11, R.85, E.19, E.27), even ‘wonderful’ (I.4). Various particular aspects of formation were described as wonderful. These included a college prayer day (E.16), placement (E.16), particular individuals (E.19, E.26) and ordination (I.11, 2I.3). Others found formation exciting, especially when looking back to see how they had changed (I.10; cf. E.25, I.3, I.9, R.22, 2I.3, 2I.14).

Along with the mixture of pain and excitement came struggle for many participants (43% of interviewees and 38% of email respondents). One male second year interviewee employed the word ‘struggle’ seven times and used it again two years later (2I.3). This was in the context of change of expectations in comparison to his previous career, and spiritual struggle. The majority of those who identified the cause of their struggle, struggled with the academic work (E.21, E.25, E.26), some because of the sheer workload (E.15), others in connecting the academic work with their ordained ministry (E.18). Some of them wrestled with theology, such as understanding God and the world (I.9, 2I.9, I.5). One first year male interviewee mentioned wrestling with matters of faith six times and two years later reflecting on his interview transcript wrote ‘in my formation I have been called to wrestle very deeply with matters of faith and doubt’ (2I.10). These accounts of the wrestling involved in formation call to mind the image of a butterfly struggling to escape from its pupa. The process of metamorphosis is rarely smooth.

Formation was described as ‘difficult’ for a range of reasons from having to write a reflective journal (I.12, E.15), to reflecting on one’s own character and how one

might be changing (I.6, I.9, 2I.1, 2I.12), to encountering people with different perspectives on theology and worship (I.4, I.10, I.13), to being away from home for residential elements of the course (I.7). For some interviewees placements had been hard (I.8, I.12) and for others it was the academic work which was hard (E.15, I.3, I.8, I.12, I.14). For a first year female ordinand, 'It's about facing up to old patterns of behaviour and ways of thinking and changing it and that is actually quite hard' (I.2).

The majority of participants reported that their experience of formation involved suffering. Two aspects of their formation in particular caused that suffering: critical thinking about the Christian faith that they held dear, and self-examination and reflection. The critical study led some to wrestle with doubt, whilst the self-reflection led some to question their identity. These issues might be illustrated by the two fundamental questions 'Who is God?' and 'Who am I?' Further discomfort was caused by the surrounding context of peers and staff who held different beliefs, and by being expected to work closely with different personalities. It seems that the two aspects of cognitive and psychological suffering, experienced within a community, compounded the stress often associated with commencing a course of study, and preparing for a change of role and occupation, especially when that is in addition to ongoing responsibilities of family, church and work.

Cetuk suggests that 'because the stakes are so high existentially speaking, and because it is in the nature of theological education to raise life's biggest and most important questions, you may come to experience seminary in all its diversity and fullness as a crucible experience.' She argues that the seminary is a crucible because the metaphor of a crucible suggests 'something that by its very nature forces a change in the structure (or nature) of the elements within it.'² She is writing about the experience of a residential community but the current empirical study has shown that the majority of ordinands training on a regional course experienced the same pressures. A minority of interviewees said that they experienced formation as a gentle process and one female respondent wrote that formation 'has felt very gentle

² Cetuk, *What to Expect in Seminary*, 88.

to the point of imperceptible, but my family and friends can see and hear changes in for instance, my chairing of group discussions' (E.17; cf. I.4, I.14, E.19, E.27).

Part of Cetuk's argument for using the metaphor of a crucible to describe a seminary is that the college community itself provides the holding container 'strong enough to withstand the heat while maintaining its shape.'³ The course community was greatly appreciated by the ordinands in the empirical study and they reported that a very important part of their experience of formation was the nurture they received. This was expressed in terms of acceptance, support and encouragement. Some students were overwhelmed by the acceptance they received from their peers. One first year female ordinand said, 'I've never known acceptance like that before in my life' (I.4; cf. I.6, I.7). It was the support of fellow students which was mentioned most often by both interviewees and email respondents (I.3, I.6, I.9, I.11, I.14, E.16, E.21). This was followed by support from the staff of the course (I.11, I.13, E.21), placement supervisors (I.9, E.21, 2I.13), training ministers (I.6, I.13), a tutor (I.13, 2I.13), and the wider benefice (E.27).

Some participants used the language of 'shared journey' to articulate the acceptance and support of peers (I.1, I.4, I.9). This led to an increase in confidence, which was reported by several people including a final year female ordinand who wrote, 'I feel much better equipped to answer questions that people might ask. I have come into a much wider understanding of God and what it is to bring about the Kingdom of God' (E.20; cf. I.5, I.13, 2I.3, 2I.12).

The participants reported experiencing both challenge and nurture during their training for ordination. The prevalence of comments about suffering during formation might suggest that there was rather more challenge than nurture. However, I suspect that it reflects the intense nature of studying theology for ordained ministry which raises the fundamental questions of 'Who is God?' and 'Who am I?'

One interviewee expressed eloquently the sense of disorientation on entering training and re-orientation on entering ordained ministry that many ordinands experienced.

³ Cetuk, *What to Expect*, 88.

At the end of her first year in training she said ‘at this point in time I feel I’m neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring because I’m not one of them and I’m not one of them and this seems to be quite universal talking to the others...’ (I.14). Two years later reflecting on the transcript of that interview she reported, ‘I feel as though I am in the right place, doing what I should be doing, following God’s call’ (2I.14). That awareness of fit, after three years of training for ordination, was expressed by many participants, despite the struggle and pain they had experienced along the way (E.21, I.13, E.25, E.26).

These comments cohere with Cetuk’s findings that during their first year seminarians experienced ‘exhilaration and struggle, confusion and hope,’ and by their third year ‘they had learnt not *what* to think but *how* to think critically and with sophistication. They had learnt not *what* to believe but that it is important *to* believe. They had learnt about God and had also *met* God in important and life-changing ways.’⁴

Biblical Metaphors used to describe the Experience of Formation

In the empirical study, interviewees were asked whether there were any biblical metaphors or phrases they found helpful in describing their experience of formation. The answers given to this question tended to relate directly to each individual’s experience and few of the biblical metaphors or images appeared more than once. Those that did were journey, shepherd, potter and clay, unreserved commitment to God as demonstrated by Mary, and complete dependence on God as expressed, for example, by looking to Christ when walking on water. Psalm 23 was the passage of scripture most often quoted or alluded to.

The majority of the scriptural examples given were ‘Links and Associations’ according to Walton’s typology of how students use the Bible in theological reflection.⁵ For example, two female participants simply linked their own experiences to a well-known story in one of the gospels. Walton suggests that this

⁴ Cetuk, *What to Expect*, 117-119.

⁵ Walton identified seven distinct types or ways in which students used the Bible and the Christian tradition: Links and Associations; Proof-texting; Resonance and Analogy; Exploring a Theological Theme; Extrapolated Question to the Tradition, One-Way Critique and Mutual Critique. Roger Walton, ‘Using the Bible and Christian Tradition in Theological Reflection’, *BJTE* 13, no. 2 (2003), 133-151.

recognition of familiarity gives a sense of orientation and reassurance. The ordinand whose placement had been in a hospital wrote, ‘the role of chaplains was like walking the Emmaus Road with those who needed our support’ (E.24), whereas the other respondent two years into ordained ministry explained, ‘the road to Emmaus story continues to speak very powerfully to me and I have certainly appreciated being able to walk alongside my peers as we puzzle things out, as well as walking alongside parishioners’ (2I.11). Another female ordinand, who sat with her mother for nine days before she died, alluded to Psalm 23 in writing ‘I would describe it as walking through the valley of the shadow of death and seeing that there was nothing to fear’ (E.25). These all suggest experiencing formation as journeying together.

One year during the residential week there had been daily Bible studies from the Song of Songs. This had evidently impacted on one participant who wrote, ‘The Song of Songs is formational as I allow myself to be “the Beloved” – and allow the “Lover” to bring me to fruitfulness’ (E.27). Another respondent offered Psalm 1 explaining ‘be like trees planted by streams of water which yields fruit in due season and whose leaf does not wither’ (E.22). Both of these suggest that the experience of formation involves drawing close to God and allowing God to work within oneself.

A third year female ordinand spoke about the importance of depending on God. In the interview she quoted ‘Ye that are heavy laden come to me’ and said that her favourite verse was from Psalm 46, ‘Be still and know that I am God’ (I.12). Two years later she reported that she had had a difficult time following the end of training when her job moved to yet another town. During this period she became more and more struck by Psalm 119:105, ‘Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.’ She wrote ‘this was illustrated by a walk to a sunrise service at Easter where I had the most pathetic torch that barely lit beyond my feet – we don’t see the whole road ahead, just the next step or two’ (2I.12). In her earlier responses she made simple associations between her own experience and brief quotations from scripture, whereas in the last example she went beyond this in drawing some wisdom for living today.

A male second year ordinand, who was going through a very difficult time with multiple bereavements when he was interviewed, said, ‘I think about the suffering

servant sometimes... it's hard to pick any one really but sometimes when you read some of the Psalms and the psalmist is complaining bitterly about how bad life is and "where are you, God," I think sometimes that rings a bell' (I.6). Two years later he reflected on the transcript of the interview 'I am just surprised I didn't add Jonah to the list as I would have gladly run to Tarshish.' He then added that 'the model of ministry I most admire is that of Joseph. He accepts the will of God, the burden placed upon him. If he grumbled we do not hear about it. He did what God asked and then disappeared from the scene. His role was about God, not about him' (2I.6). This participant illustrates 'Proof texting' according to Walton, whereby the texts chosen justify what the person has done (the reference to the Psalms), or indicate what the person should do (the reference to Joseph). He has gone beyond the simple association of experience with scripture to seek guidance on how he should respond to his situation. In doing so he has referred to the Psalms, a minor prophet and a character in the gospels. His experience of formation echoes the pattern found in many of the Psalms of crying out to God in pain and distress before encountering God and turning to praise.⁶

Another example of seeking guidance from scripture was offered by a male participant in ordained ministry, who quoted John 15:5, '...if a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' He wrote, 'I am learning the need to rely totally on God. I could not do this in my own strength and in my own strength I would achieve nothing' (2I.3). Other participants looked to stories about the apostle Peter in the gospels as a model for their own behaviour: a first year female ordinand found it 'really comforting' to think about what happened. She said, 'thinking about Peter's formation in particular, about the denying and then he realized what he was doing which made him resolve never to do that again and it's almost as though you need to put your foot in it in order to realize that you've put your foot in it so that you don't do it again' (I.4; cf. I.5). Another female participant wrote two years after ordination 'walking on the water, like Peter, realising "I can't do this" and reaching for the hand that holds me fast' (2I.14). Many of the responses demonstrated that the participants were well aware of 'the greatness of the trust that is now to be committed to your charge' and that 'You

⁶ Cf. Brueggemann's scheme of orientation – disorientation – new orientation in Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984).

cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength, but only by the grace and power of God.’⁷ One female ordinand, writing six weeks before her ordination, found Mary’s assent to the will of God inspirational and she reflected on its significance for her own life:

I now keep going back to ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Mary’s assent. Not given lightly and probably reluctantly but with a sense that there are times when you just can’t say no to God, regardless of the huge thing that is being asked and must trust that you will be given what is needed to fulfil whatever you are called to do (2I.4).

Two female interviewees employed a more complex form of links and associations which Walton calls ‘Resonance and Analogy.’ Rather than simply identifying texts that resembled their experience, or that could guide their behaviour, they both perceived their experience as analogous to a passage of scripture and used this ‘as a sounding or springboard for more extended discussion between theology and experience.’⁸ For example, an interviewee who had already described her experience of formation in terms of being deconstructed and reconstructed, referred to Paul talking about ‘Christ being the foundation and we are part of the building blocks.’ She said, ‘it does feel a bit like that. Jesus has been the foundation the whole time but my building blocks haven’t been in the right place... I’m sure they were in a fine place but I’ve needed to put them back into place again if I’m going to build stronger and higher’ (I.9). Two years later she had been reflecting on Romans 12 for a sermon and this verse resonated with her experience of the past year in ordained ministry: ‘Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind’ (Rom. 12:2). She wrote, ‘and then of course the passage goes on to remind us that we have a responsibility to use the gifts given to us uniquely according to God’s grace given to us’ (2I.9; cf. 2I.1). She reported that the last year had pushed her beyond boundaries and that she had been able to respond only by the grace of God. In her reflections on the Pauline epistles, this participant noted the literary context of the text quoted thus demonstrating some awareness of the suitability of the chosen text.

⁷ *Common Worship: Ordination Services*, 39.

⁸ Walton, ‘Using the Bible’, 139.

The second example of resonance and analogy comes from a female interviewee who had suffered from ME for many years. She said ‘potter and clay... because I was physically broken by illness, I really have been put back together physically health-wise but also as a person.’ Whilst ill in bed she had spent many months meditating on Psalm 23 verse by verse. She said, ‘I think the whole Christian experience of... resurrection changing you... is that it’s new life, I understood intellectually and... I lived it and... recovery has been amazing and I love the thought that in the resurrection the wounds of Christ are still visible...’ (I.13). Two years later she herself was in good health but her ordained husband had been very ill and forced to take early retirement so she had not yet begun ordained ministry. She wrote:

It is interesting that these images interweave through my experience one being more to the fore for a while then giving way to another. Am I back in the ‘valley of the shadow,’ or perhaps another valley? Again the 23rd Psalm mustn’t be read as a linear journey but more of a spiral of experiences that we constantly move between in our earthly journey (2I.13).

There is a depth and breadth to her reflections, and a willingness to question her own interpretation of the texts to which she refers.

For a first year female ordinand the sense of calling into priesthood was a ‘specific sense of calling to be willing to lay down my life and... being broken...’ (I.2; cf. 2I.5). She identified the relevant biblical metaphor as being ‘in Jesus on the cross.’ She then recounted a recent sermon about ‘the pattern in Jesus’ miracles of taking the bread, blessing the bread, breaking it and serving it out.’ She recalled, ‘The sermon talked about the road to Emmaus and how Jesus was recognized in the breaking of the bread and how that was a pattern for how people find ministry.’ She then revealed that the sense of being taken, blessed and broken in order to be served out was how she was feeling at the time of the interview (I.2). There were some elements of resonance and analogy in this account although without some of the analysis Walton would expect of this type of theological reflection.

Another example of resonance and analogy with critical reflection on the person rather than on the text is that of an Ignatian meditation on the Wedding at Cana during a residential weekend. This had been a very powerful experience for a male

ordinand who said, 'I have been really very, very deeply struck: the person who addressed the needs of those that were there for more wine was Jesus, it wasn't me.' He admitted feeling responsible for providing for those in need before realizing that 'it was something beyond human industry to address.' He reflected, 'the abundance of the generosity of God in the face of the helplessness of humanity would be a biblical thing I'd say in formation' (I.10). The self-reflection resulted in the identification of an important theological theme to guide his future ministry.

The metaphor of journey was significant for a final year male ordinand who said, 'there's something about the experience of the people of Israel when they cross the Red Sea and when Elijah crosses the Jordan... you have to move forwards for the way to open up... there has been a... sense on the journey that as you move forward... new things open up, the waters part and God leads you on into new areas' (I.1; cf. I.3, I.11). He illustrates Walton's type of 'Exploring a Theological Theme' in which the biblical or theological theme is used as an interpretive tool, or lens, for examining experience. The same ordinand also mentioned Psalm 23 and said 'the concept of the shepherd, and the flock, feeding the flock, has become very much in my mind during the placement' (I.3). Two years later in ordained ministry he wrote 'the analogy of feeding sheep is still strong for me; people desperately need spiritual food today' (2I.3). Although the metaphor of the shepherd may not be considered a major theological theme it is nonetheless an important one for those training for ordination and one which several participants explored: a female participant wrote on the morning she was to be ordained priest 'the Biblical picture which I am wrestling with most at the moment is that of the Good Shepherd. In the ordination service for priests we are told to keep the image of the Good Shepherd before us' (2I.5). She was pondering whether she was an assistant shepherd to Jesus helping to lead his people but always with him in front. In her reflections she could see various different ways in which the liturgical and biblical texts could be interpreted.

A second year female ordinand said that she always thought of Revelation:

John the Divine talks about going almost up into the heavens and being allowed to see things from a different perspective and I suppose in Revelation you've got all those trials and tribulations and hard things and at the end you're actually given that glorious picture of heaven with all the colours and the light and the sort of iridescence of it all and I think

there are moments in formation that are... hard and troublesome but somehow God manipulates those in the best sense of the word and gives you a moment of looking at them with great positiveness so that for me is... biblical (I.8).

She also mentioned that many of the Psalms have moments of woe and anguish ‘and yet sometimes at the end there’s a coming out of them’ and reflected that ‘sometimes it’s not until we get to the end or can look back with hindsight that we begin to see things in perspective’ (I.8). In these examples she is looking at the whole experience of formation through the lens of disorientation and re-orientation, or new orientation, with the new orientation giving the divine perspective.

Email answers to the request for biblical metaphors or phrases found helpful in describing participants’ experience of formation were much briefer. Several respondents quoted verses they hung on to in difficult times. These included Psalm 46 ‘Be still and know that I am God’ (E.15) and Isaiah 46:19 ‘I have engraved you on the palm of my hand’ (E.16). The metaphor of potter and clay appeared twice (E.20, E.22). One person wrote that ‘Philippians 1:5-6 comes to mind. It is God who is doing the work’ (E.17). Another mentioned ‘in the wilderness’ (E.18). Whereas for a third still awaiting a title post, ‘the Jeremiah sense of being known by God even before birth’ was comforting (E.19).

There were three more intriguing responses: ‘threshing floor – this image appears several times in different contexts – this range of context describes my formation experience well’ (E.23); ‘I cannot think of any except perhaps, ‘no pain, no gain’!! That is not a biblical phrase, but it strikes me that it is a biblical principle!’ (E.21); and ‘the bit in Omar Khayyam about the clay saying to the potter “gently, gently” I think that about sums it up. I suppose “treasure in clay jars” would be more biblical!’ (E.26). These all allude to the pain of formation, although without any further information it is difficult to offer a more specific interpretation.

Walton’s taxonomy of using the Bible in theological reflection has proved helpful in analysing the responses to this question. The majority of responses from participants were links and associations, with a few examples of analogies. They consisted of simple quotations with little evidence of reflection on their original context or the

hermeneutical approach taken in interpreting the quotation. The examples of engaging with theological themes, such as the journey and the shepherd, do seem to illustrate a difference in kind from link and association in that there is some reflection on the analogy. There was little evidence overall of Walton's types involving a critical engagement with scripture. However, this should not be surprising considering that in the empirical study participants were asked to provide metaphors which related to how they felt about formation. They were not asked to produce written academic assignments, which formed the majority of the data for Walton's study. Indeed Walton acknowledges that if participants 'are seeking to relate their own personal growth in or response to a situation they are more likely to use a link and association, analogy, or theme type engagement.'⁹

The Locus of Formation

Interviewees were asked whether they thought that any particular aspect of themselves had been formed during their training. The aim was to discover whether in their own experience participants could identify a particular locus of formation or whether formation affected the whole person as many of them had declared in articulating their understanding of formation. This question was introduced with the comment that 'some people say that formation concerns educating the mind, others focus on spiritual growth, others concentrate on developing character, and others skills for professional ministry.' These four aspects were suggested by the four related areas of formation appearing in Roman Catholic documents concerning the formation of priests: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.¹⁰

In response to this question, half of the interviewees and half of the email respondents explicitly stated that formation affected all four aspects (I.1, I.2, I.9, I.10, I.11, I.13, I.14, E.19, E.21, E.22, E.23, E.24, E.26). One male third year interviewee said, 'I'd want to take issue with separating out the individual elements because it's about the person actually, it's about me as a person being shaped,' then, after giving examples of how each aspect had been formed in his own experience, he continued, 'I think I'd even hesitate to pull out one and to say it's been more about

⁹ Walton, 'Using the Bible', 148.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

this than the others because... even if you have had a strong sort of intellectual input that can at the same time be character-shaping as well and can lead on into... developing your practical gifts in a sort of slightly different way' (I.1).

Nevertheless most of the respondents easily identified how the different aspects of themselves had been formed. Half of interviewees and half of email respondents stated that they had definitely been formed through having their minds educated (I.5, I.8, I.10, I.11, I.13, I.14, E.17, E.18, E.19, E.20, E.21, E.24). However, it was not the education alone which was considered to be most formative, it was when the academic study was reflected upon and prayed through and allowed to impact upon the ordinand's spiritual life that it became significantly formative. A second year female ordinand said that, 'it's been more about educating my mind and spiritual development.' She went on to explain that, 'it's definitely been a whole spiritual attitude, that has been the biggest formative change for me... the whole educating my mind and acquiring more theological knowledge that I like to pray over, mull over and develop again so those two.' She then gave an illustration of how her education had fed into her spiritual development enabling her to contribute 'some theology' to a parish discussion on reducing the frequency of Holy Communion (I.5; cf. I.9, 2I.5, E.19). A third year female ordinand also reported, 'I think what I've learnt in educational terms has contributed to the spiritual change that I think has been the most significant part of my formation' (I.11; cf. E.20, E.27).

Other contexts in which participants identified the educational element of their training as formative were when they came from a scientific background and had to learn to argue theologically (I.2, I.10); when they grew sufficiently in confidence 'to have an opinion' and even to 'criticize Hauerwas' (I.13; cf. 2I.3); and when they came from a conservative or charismatic evangelical background and encountered very different theological perspectives for the first time, particularly when those views were expressed by fellow students or members of staff they had come to know and respect (I.2, I.7, I.9, 2I.4, E.17).

There was some correlation between the interviewees who identified that their minds had been educated (I.5, I.8, I.10, I.11, I.13, I.14) and those who found this aspect of formation challenging (I.5, I.10), or hard (I.8, I.14). A negative attitude towards the

academic element of the training was expressed by a minority of participants: for instance, one female email respondent wrote, ‘During training, I introduced quite a lot of new material to my mind, so my knowledge increased, although I have to say that a lot of it was not particularly relevant or helpful knowledge’ (E.25; cf. I.7). This comment raises the question whether she had integrated her academic study with her spiritual life and ministry or kept it compartmentalized. Another participant reflecting on her interview transcript two years later agreed that ‘my college training was very much about spiritual and educational growth’ then added ‘because in hindsight it really didn’t prepare me very much for professional ministry – that is happening in the curacy’ (2I.11). This illustrates an expectation found among some participants that the pre-ordination training would fully equip them for ordained ministry, whereas in practice pre-ordination training is biased towards academic study whilst post-ordination training is biased towards practical skills. The Church of England now explicitly calls pre-ordination training Phase 1 and the curacy Phase 2 of IME in order to make the point that training for ordained ministry spans both the time spent in a college or on a course and the curacy.

A more nuanced perspective was expressed by one female participant, who wrote two years after her interview and shortly after being ordained priest:

As I reflected at the end of my second year – much of my formation had stemmed at that time through my academic study – it had challenged and fed me, but then came a time when I needed space just to ‘Be in the Presence of God’ – almost a realisation that however much great theologians and academic texts and conversations can expand one’s knowledge of God – and not only in mind (it definitely fed my heart and soul too) – in the end there is nothing else to do but sit at the feet of Jesus and soak in his love, and affirmation. This year has been about being formed through experience and related conversation – no time for academic study (2I.9).

Spiritual growth was the aspect of formation which appeared most often in the responses. 71% of interviewees talked about it (I.1, I.2, I.3, I.5, I.6, I.7, I.8, I.11, I.12, I.14); and in the responses to the interview transcripts two years later 50% of interviewees (2I.3, 2I.4, 2I.5, 2I.6, 2I.11, 2I.12, 2I.13) and 69% of email respondents wrote about spiritual growth (E.16, E.17, E.19, E.20, E.21, E.22, E.24, E.25, E.27). For one email respondent spiritual growth was ‘a huge factor’ (E.21) and for a final year female interviewee formation ‘affected me spiritually most’ as she came ‘to rely

an awful lot more on God during training' this was partly 'through the encouragement to get into good habits with regular prayer and also with a journal' which she'd found 'extremely helpful' (I.11). Participants mentioned spiritual growth through using the Daily Office (I.5, E.22, E.24), and contemplative prayer (I.2, E.26, E.27), both of which had been introduced to them during their training. 'The spiritual side' had grown through spending time with fellow students (I.12), through worship in the local church (E.25), or encountering different spiritual practices during placements (2I.12).

Comments concerning spiritual growth were almost always positive. The exceptions were one email respondent who expressed concern that there was insufficient time for spirituality during residential elements of the course (E.16), and two interviewees who complained there was not enough emphasis on spiritual growth during training (I.6, I.7). However, both of them had had profound spiritual experiences prior to commencing training. An email respondent pointed out that 'spiritual growth is not confined to ordination formation, but perhaps it gives you some particular space to do so' (E.19; cf. I.3, E.24).

One email respondent wrote, 'Character development, I believe, rests on spiritual growth. Without spiritual maturity, Christian character will not be fully authentic or stand the test of troubles and temptations' (E.25; cf. E.17). However a surprising number of participants (21% of interviewees and 15% of email respondents) thought it unlikely that their character had changed given their age and life experience (I.3, I.6, I.12, E.15, E.24, 2I.11, 2I.12). A female second year interviewee was unsure whether her character had developed. She said, 'that's a difficult thing to reflect on personally maybe that's something someone sees from the outside' (I.9; cf. I.7, I.8).

Two years later reflecting on her interview transcript this person wrote,

although I am aware of my personal responses to a variety of situations in Ministry, I still feel unsure whether it is actually developing my character. Of course, I hope that I am being transformed daily into the likeness of Christ, but because of the incredible pastoral load, I am more aware of my vulnerability, brokenness and my failings than any positive development!! (2I.9).

This reveals some pain in personal formation. An increased awareness of vulnerability and brokenness leading to an acknowledgement that people cannot

minister in their own strength and need to depend on the grace of God could be viewed as a positive development in Christlikeness.

Many respondents readily acknowledged that their character was changing (I.1, I.2, I.4, I.11, I.12, E.26, 2I.4, 2I.5). Comments ranged from the general ‘I think my character has been shaped and grown’ (I.1; cf. I.11) to ‘I’m more accepting of other people than perhaps maybe I was... you become more acutely aware of how you come across to another person’ (I.4). Two years later this female ordinand reflected, ‘There’s something about inhabiting the ministerial role and how this forms character, particularly in how you deal with people’ (2I.4; cf. 2I.5).

For two interviewees developing character was the aspect they were most aware of. Both were first year ordinands, one male and one female. The female interviewee spoke movingly about having to care for two members of her family who suffered from mental illness. She said that character is ‘recognizing the process of intentionally addressing issues that come up, and not dismissing it’ (I.2). This is an important realization. It illustrates the self-appraisal necessary to critical thinking, according to Brookfield, and the subjective reframing of transformative learning, according to Mezirow.¹¹ The male interviewee explained how his formation was happening in the two contexts of work and family life. He said, ‘the biggest thing for me is the sense of identity, personality and being, particularly in the context of relationship and how I am with others... a greater and deeper acknowledgement of my limitations as a human being’ (I.10). Reflecting on his interview transcript two years later he wrote, ‘I would place emphasis on development in my sense of self and the expansion of my faith. Perhaps psychological-spiritual would be a helpful term to describe this’ (2I.10).

One female email respondent illustrated the significance of mentors who reflect back to the ordinand how they are perceived by others. She reported that negative comments from both training minister and tutor had ‘made me question what I was really like so made me more challenging of myself’ (E.22). A second year male interviewee who expressed doubt about being able to change ‘what you basically are,’

¹¹ Cf. p.128 above.

also said, ‘you do have to try and get rid of those character traits which are unwelcome, unwanted... you have got to be someone who reflects Christ’ (I.3). Two years later he reported, ‘I think one aspect that has changed significantly is my awareness of, my sensitivity to, other people. I was always a very self-centered person for most of my life, but ministry demands that you give yourself to others and think less of yourself’ (2I.3). A female email respondent wrote that when she began training for ordination ‘at 63 years old’ she ‘could look back on a long maturing process already.’ She continued, ‘what has been remarkable is that fear of being “exposed” to criticism and attention (which was very great) has gone entirely. Defensiveness has diminished as I drop my defences and allow God to defend me. That is a major change – and unexpected’ (E.27; cf. E21). This suggests that age and life experience are not a barrier to the formation of character.

A second year male interviewee said that formation was ‘less to do with character and more to do with understanding the roles of a priest in the church and how to deliver that.’ He was concerned about ‘conducting services’ and said ‘it’s brilliant to watch somebody else and to have all the critiques in the world of it but until you’re actually stood there it’s different.’ He was desperate to gain ‘practical competence’ (I.6). Two years later reflecting on his interview transcript he wrote, ‘I did feel that the practical nature of my development during training was lacking... becoming familiar with the day to day practicalities of parish life are important for growth. The “knowing how” gives a lot of confidence.’ He then explained that this element had been most important during his diaconal year: ‘Confidence has not grown through knowing more things, but in knowing more how to do things’ (2I.6). A male contemporary wrote, ‘doing the “job”, even part time, inevitably contributes to the formational process... Ministry is like many other vocations, you continually grow into it’ (2I.3). Both of these male participants had had significant competence-driven careers before training for ordination and struggled with a sense of being deskilled on entering training.

Many other participants were keen to point out that rather than bestowing skills for professional ministry, training for ordination had honed and developed skills that they already possessed (E.17, I.4, I.8, I.13). One email respondent declared that ‘the most obvious area of formation for me was in skills for professional ministry.’

Within that she included her previous training as a Reader. She wrote, ‘The skills training during the ordination course which stands out was the Listening Skills course, other “people skills” in responding to the ups and downs of the [fellowship group] and the weekend on death and dying’ (E.25). Others also mentioned the Listening Skills course (I.3), and the ‘challenging and satisfying’ experience of working together in a fellowship group (E.19).

A second year female interviewee said that professional development had been ‘particularly formative.’ She had never preached before and discovered that ‘I just love it, love the preparation, the prayer that goes with it, the reading and hopefully being able to deliver what God wants to say to his people at that time’ (I.8). Several participants mentioned becoming more conscious of their preaching style through receiving feedback (E.17, E.26, I.1, I.9, I.10). Respondents were appreciative of the opportunities to experience worship patterns outside their own tradition and to ‘take risks within a safe environment’ (E.19). One email respondent in her final year of training wrote, ‘I now have practical skills in leading, preaching, singing, worship planning etc that I didn’t have before’ (E.26; cf. I.4, I.14, 2I.4, 2I.12), and another in ordained ministry reported ‘my continuing training now is giving me some specific skills e.g. taking funerals’ (E.19).

Enjoyment and Engagement

Interviewees were next asked whether there was a part of their training which they had particularly enjoyed such as academic study, tutorial groups, residential weekends, developing ministry work, and placement. They were asked to explain why that was so. Then they were asked which aspect they had put most energy into. These questions were seeking to ascertain whether there was any correlation between the perceived locus of formation and level of engagement.

Despite the moans about the academic work, 50% of interviewees and 62% of email respondents declared that they had enjoyed it (I.1, I.2, I.5, I.6, I.9, I.10, I.12; E15, E.16, E.22, E.23, E.24, E.25, E.26, E.27). 57% of interviewees and 31% of email respondents specifically mentioned enjoying studying in the small group tutorials (I.1, I.2, I.3, I.7, I.8, I.10, I.11, I.12, E.19, E.24, E.25, E.27). For one first year male

interviewee it had been the highlight of the whole process. He said, ‘being in a small group environment where you’re probed and put on the spot and stretched and asked to think through things at a deeper level than you might otherwise have done, we’re questioned and you can question, it’s just fantastic, I’ve found that so enriching and fulfilling and exciting’ (I.10; cf. I.1, I.2).

57% of interviewees and 38% of email respondents mentioned enjoying the residential elements of the course (I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, I.11, I.12, I.13, I.14, E.17, E.19, E.21, E.25, E.26). One third year female interviewee said, ‘I found that so helpful to be back in a group of people who’ve all been experiencing the same, trying to juggle life and work and everything else and battling with the same problems with some bits of the course’ (I.11; cf. I.14, E.19, E.21; E.25). 29% of interviewees spoke about enjoying being part of the fellowship groups which met during residential periods for mutual support and to prepare worship (I.2, I.3, I.7, I.9). One email respondent wrote, ‘I still miss the weekends very much indeed!’ (E.21; cf. 2I.5).

Two years after the interviews one female participant reflected that it was being part of the course community that was most enjoyable (2I.2) and a male colleague agreed with her, making a very important point about the significance of shared experience to a sense of community:

I would want to add greater emphasis to the element of community – the friendships made are something that has endured and we still meet regularly as a year group. I am inclined to say that true formation can only happen in the context of relationships with others and this is the soil in which formation germinates and grows. The fact that we only came together once every 6 weeks didn’t diminish the sense of community, and may even have enhanced it as it was not about geographical presence but shared experience (2I.1).

43% of interviewees and 23% of email respondents mentioned enjoying the practical ministry aspects of the training (I.4, I.6, I.9, I.10, I.11, I.13, E.17, E.19, E.26). 50% of the interviewees and 54% of the email respondents reported that they had enjoyed their placements (I.1, I.5, I.7, I.11, I.12, I.14, 2I.10, E.15, E.16, E.18, E.21, E.22, E.24, E.27). One second year female ordinand said, ‘the outstanding thing for me has been the placement’ (I.7; cf. 2I.10) and an email respondent wrote, ‘my placement was definitely the highlight of my training giving me the opportunity to do what I do

best and that is working with people and sharing my faith' (E.18).

The majority of participants mentioned that they enjoyed the academic work into which they also put most energy. The second largest number of respondents reported that they enjoyed being part of the course community, which formed in both small group tutorials and during residential weekends. However, few people mentioned putting energy into this aspect of their training. I suspect that this was not something they consciously thought about contributing energy to. Participants were aware of putting energy into the practical areas of training, both within parish contexts, shorter daylong experiences, and on extended placements. This came third in terms of the number of people who declared that they had enjoyed them. This may be because for many participants their experiences in practical ministry were challenging or difficult.

Noticeably Formative Experiences

The last question to interviewees about their experience of formation sought to tease out anything not already mentioned and allowed for the influence of other factors such as the staff, the location of the residential components, or even something outside the course which might have been formative for an individual. Interviewees were asked, 'Can you describe a particular person, experience, subject, location, or event which has been noticeably formative for you during your ordination training? How was this formative?'

As with the biblical metaphors, answers to this question tended to relate directly to each individual's experience. In the interviews responses often consisted of long narrative accounts. A first year female ordinand from an evangelical background, for instance, spoke about her fellowship group preparing for a 'fresh expression' Eucharist at a residential weekend. She was appointed the co-ordinator for the service and enthused about how she had learnt what a credence table was and the importance to some members of the group of handling the 'communion elements' reverently. The service was evidently a success and she was very excited about the whole experience (I.2). This illustrates the significance for formation of encountering difference when collaborating closely with a group of peers.

Another first year female ordinand related an experience of encountering difference in a new priest. Her parish had recently received a new incumbent who celebrated communion differently from his predecessor and this had upset people, including herself, to the extent that people were in tears when receiving the elements. She said that this was noticeably formative for her because it had made her 'so aware that self is not important, that it's not about you, it's about God and about where you're called to serve' (I.4). Two years later as she reflected on the transcript of her interview she wrote, 'living with the change in how our local tradition was altered has definitely been really formative. Knowing that you can still stand in the sanctuary with someone you do not see eye to eye to was really important, painful but important' (2I.4).

A second year female ordinand recalled two powerful spiritual experiences during training which were new to her and noticeably formative. One was an Ignatian exercise on the wedding at Cana led by a member of staff and the other was attending the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday at the local cathedral, which was a completely alien experience to her evangelical background (I.7; cf. E.19).

The support of peers was an important aspect of formation for some participants: two second year ordinands, one male and the other female, appreciated other students sharing their experiences and the way in which they listened to each other and prayed for each other (I.6; I.9). A first year male ordinand twice related how much he had gained from travelling to and from the residential weekends with two other students. The three were very different characters and their conversations 'affirmed our differences, they've been fun, and we've laughed a lot together' (I.10).

Certain key individuals were inspiring for ordinands: two years after the interviews a female ordinand identified the principal, 'I always had a sense of his holiness and goodness' (2I.7). A contemporary identified her staff consultant because he listened and he was 'always backing up everything with prayer' (I.8; cf. E.16, E.18, E.19). A first year female ordinand said that a particular member of staff's preaching was very inspiring (I.14; cf. E.18). A second year male ordinand also found the staff at the course to be inspiring, particularly one member of staff whom he also encountered in parish ministry. He also mentioned his spiritual director and training minister (I.3). A

third year male ordinand was hesitant to name one thing but offered ‘some of the feedback that I’ve had from my training minister to sermons.’ He said that the feedback had been ‘wonderfully encouraging but also very honest and straightforward’ (I.1). An email respondent wrote that ‘several priests I know were particularly formative, partly by way of example, the way they exercised their own ministries’ (E.24).

A third year female ordinand mentioned her placement ‘because it was such a culture shock... these dear people really, really struggling some of them and yet I was bowled over by their faith and their trust in God and I think that really opened my eyes to the power of God in situations which to me look like irredeemable’ (I.11; cf. E.25). The placement was also ‘the big formative thing’ for another third year ordinand. She recounted in detail a critical incident which occurred when she was on placement in a hospital. She had been called to speak with a patient on a renal unit who wanted to withdraw from dialysis and effectively end her life. She reflected, ‘I think I saw the value of chaplaincy but I also saw that perhaps I could do it which I hadn’t thought I could up to then’ (I.12).

One email respondent wrote about a powerful realization during her placement in a Cathedral (E.26), and another about a placement in ‘a liberal Anglo-Catholic team ministry, with several women on the staff.’ She commented, ‘I loved the colour, the drama, the music. I discerned the flow of the Holy Spirit throughout the benefice and I learned much. Coming from an open evangelical non-conformist setting, I was deeply surprised and delighted with what I found there. It broadened and deepened me’ (E.27). A third email respondent mentioned her placement in a convent and ‘especially my supervisor an amazing lady with a “wicked” sense of humour!’ (E.15).

Two years after the interviews, when they were asked to reflect on their interview transcripts, many of the participants identified new experiences during those two years as being noticeably formative. Perhaps the most obvious one was ordination. One female respondent wrote, ‘Ordination to the Priesthood was profound and brought a sense of completion.’ She continued, ‘to announce the death of a 7 year old boy at the end of the Easter Service to almost 600 people, many who knew and

loved the family, was an experience of God's grace and God's glory. It was done in my role as a leader within the church family and it was done for God and with God' (2I.9). Another commented that since then 'I guess it has been the growing confidence in church, and the realisation that I am now (for the last six weeks) a real minister' (2I.12).

For a male ordinand now in his final year of training 'another key experience' was the decision to take voluntary redundancy after 23 years working at the same place. He also mentioned his spiritual director, a nun, who he described as 'a wonderful companion during my journey' (I.10; cf. E.21). A female ordinand also in her final year of training wrote, 'helping run the tech side of Easter School successfully and the completely unexpected public thanks for this.' She reflected, 'As a normally behind the scenes person, I was amazed at the comments from tutors on something I hadn't realized was a skill/gift... It has encouraged me to look not only at myself but also to seek others' gifts and encourage them to use them' (2I.14). A third year female ordinand said that what had been noticeably formative for her had been 'doing the ordinary Sunday act of worship in my training church' (I.13; cf. E.21).

It is noticeable that the majority of these responses indicate the significance of a particular encounter with a specific person to an individual's formation. The majority of those people were connected with the training course but not all. Once again the centrality of the course community to formation was evident. If one theme emerges then it must be encountering difference in such a way that forces the individual in formation to look again at himself or herself and to reconsider their own perspectives.

Concluding Comments

The participants in the empirical study reported experiencing formation primarily as challenging and painful, especially when they were forced to reconsider their own perspectives. The two aspects of formation that proved to be most challenging were critical thinking about personal faith, and self-reflection leading to questions about identity. These were summarized by the two questions: 'Who is God?' and 'Who am

I?’ During the three years of training participants reported feeling deconstructed and reconstructed, whilst the course community nurtured them through the process.

The biblical metaphors participants chose to illustrate their experiences were journey, shepherd, potter and clay, and dependence on God. The most quoted passage was Psalm 23 with its assertion of trust in God the shepherd whilst journeying through difficult times to restoration and celebration. The majority of responses were associations and analogies rather than the result of critical engagement with the text.

When asked about the locus of formation, participants asserted that the whole person was formed, whilst still being able to identify how different aspects of themselves had been formed during training. Spiritual growth was the aspect mentioned most often, followed by educating the mind. However, it was when the academic study was reflected upon in the context of prayer that formation was most likely to occur. Some participants recognised that they had been formed through development in character, and a few through the acquisition of skills for professional ministry.

The participants enjoyed and engaged most with the academic study, and the course community. The latter seemed to be more about shared experience than periods in residence, although these facilitate the creation of community. The course community provided a safe environment when ordinands had encountered difference (whether that be in belief, style of worship, personality, cultural context, or on placement), and been forced to reconsider their own perspectives.

It has been important to listen to the experiences of formation reported by some ordinands in training because these voices have been missing from the debates about ministerial education. However, we need to bear in mind that the data gathered in the empirical study are the product of self-reporting and may be biased by, for instance, the feelings of the respondents when completing the questionnaire, or during the interviews. These potential problems with reliability and validity are compounded by a lack of comparable studies to date.

Chapter 8: Formation for Ordained Ministry

Whereas Chapter 1 above investigated official Anglican understandings of ordained ministry through reference to Canon Law and the ordinals, this chapter presents the views of the ordinands in training in conversation with some of the recent literature. All of the participants in the empirical study were in training for ordained ministry: 96% of them for Anglican priesthood. As was demonstrated in Chapter 1, throughout the history of the Church there have been different understandings of the priesthood of the ordained ministry and this diversity was reflected in the responses to the last interview question: ‘Some people see a priest as primarily a person who performs certain tasks, others see a priest as a person who is set apart to be different from other people. How would you describe a priest in relation to these two views? How do you see priesthood? What is its essence?’

The Ordained Ministry as a Distinctive Ministry

The New Testament indicates two different yet related concepts of (a) the ministry of the whole ‘priestly’ people of God and (b) the emergence of a distinctive ministry of some individuals, who are called by God and equipped by him (1 Pet 2:4-10; 1 Pet 5:1-5). Church of England documents interpret this as the Church being ‘called to be a sign and instrument of the Kingdom of God to reach out in prophetic proclamation to the world’ with the distinctive ministry having ‘a special calling to enable the whole Church to fulfil its calling to be an effective sign and instrument of Christ’s mission to the world.’¹ This could be understood as the whole priestly people of God ministering to the world whilst those called to a distinctive ministry minister to the Church.

There is a very real tension in parochial ministry between the members of the congregation who expect the undivided attention of ‘their’ ordained minister and the commissioning and licensing of that person to minister to the whole parish, whether or not the people worship within the parish church. However, the distinctive ministry does not exist in order to serve the Church but rather to stimulate the Church in

¹ *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry*, 22.

serving God's mission and Christ's ministry in the world. As Greenwood argues, 'parish priests should not regard as their primary role the provision of ministry to others. Rather, precisely through the celebration of the sacraments, preaching and pastoral care they are to stimulate, interweave and support God's calling of all.' This is so that the entire Church might release God's love into the world.²

As *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* notes, 'The entire Church has a ministry, yet not all baptised Christians have the same responsibility to shepherd the flock, to care for the Word and sacraments, to perform defined and specific acts in the name of Christ and for the service of his people and to lead mission.'³ The ordained ministry brings particular responsibilities but not separation from the ministry of all Christians. The ministry of the whole Church and that of the ordained are interdependent; in the language of the ecumenical document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, they 'animate' each other.⁴ Greenwood similarly points to an understanding of all ordained ministry as inseparably interconnected with the life of the whole of the baptized Church membership.⁵ God's mission is only achieved in practice if the community of the Church recognizes and trusts the ordained minister. And it is only when the ordained minister recognizes God among the people that he or she is encouraged and enabled to exercise their responsibilities.⁶ As *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* reminds us:

The ordained ministry exists within and not apart from the common royal priesthood of the people of God, who themselves derive their primary responsibility from their call to participate in Christ's ministry serving God's purposes in the world – itself a world without meaning except as God's creation, oriented towards the fulfilment of God's reign.⁷

From their responses to the interview question, it appears that many of the participants struggled with understanding the place of the ordained ministry within the priestly ministry of the whole people of God. Several respondents affirmed their belief in the priesthood of all believers (I.1, I.9, E.15, 2I.12), although one female

² Robin Greenwood, *Parish Priests: For the Sake of the Kingdom* (London: SPCK, 2009), xii.

³ *Priesthood*, 19.

⁴ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 23.

⁵ Robin Greenwood, *Transforming Priesthood: A New Theology of Mission and Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1995), 141.

⁶ *Education for the Church's Ministry*, 28-29.

⁷ *Formation for Ministry*, 30.

participant reflecting on her interview transcript two years later wrote, ‘I no longer believe in the priesthood of all believers’ (2I.7). As she moved from a conservative evangelical perspective to a more experiential charismatic contemplative spirituality during training, and especially through the experience of a hospital placement, she was dismayed at the lack of obvious holiness in those around her in the Church.

Priests as Leaders

The Anglican-Reformed Commission, *God’s Reign & Our Unity*, may be helpful for some people in using the language of leadership rather than distinctive ministry: ‘Leadership in the church means leading others into the company of Jesus so that their lives may be offered to the Father, and also leading others into the world to challenge the dominion of evil in the name of Christ and in the power of the Spirit.’⁸ In the empirical study, 71% of the interviewees (I.1, I.2, I.3, I.5, I.6, I.7, I.9, I.14, 2I.11) and 31% of the email respondents (E.15, E.16, E.23, E.24) used the language of leadership. For a first year female ordinand priesthood was very clearly about leadership, ‘it’s about going ahead of everybody’ (I.2); whereas for a second year female ordinand, who said that in the past she had always led by sharing experiences, it was about leading ‘from within.’ She then went on to make the point that ‘a leader is not a priest’ (I.9; cf. I.1). Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that a leader is not necessarily a priest but that, according to the Common Worship Ordinal, all ordained ministers are leaders in the Church.⁹ In order to describe the difference between secular models of leadership and leadership within the Church, Graham Tomlin (at the time Dean of St Mellitus College) suggests ‘a specifically priestly form of leadership – one that is deeply conscious that it serves and exists only in the light of the priesthood of Christ, the only true Leader.’¹⁰ By this he does not mean that Jesus is the model to emulate, rather that Christian leadership derives from the leadership of Christ: ‘Christ exercises his leadership precisely through the leadership of his ministers, who represent and mediate his rule to the Church and who perfect it

⁸ Anglican-Reformed Commission, *God’s Reign & Our Unity* (London: SPCK, 1984), 48.

⁹ *Ordination Services*, 32; cf. pp.19-21 above.

¹⁰ Graham Tomlin, *The Widening Circle: Priesthood as God’s way of Blessing the World* (London: SPCK, 2014), 135.

so it can be offered back to God, fit for the purpose for which it was originally called.’¹¹

Priests are Set Apart

In response to the interview question, 36% of interviewees (I.3, I.9, I.11, I.12, 2I.7) and 23% of email respondents objected to the language of being ‘set apart’ (E.22, E.23, E.26), whereas 50% of interviewees acknowledged that they were set apart by virtue of their vocation (I.2, I.4, I.6, I.8, I.10, I.13, I.14). Having originally objected to the language of being set apart, two years later after ordination one male respondent had changed his perspective. He wrote that priests ‘are called by God for a very special service to God and God’s people in a way that others are not. In this sense priests are set apart, inevitably, and are perceived as being so’ (2I.3). Several respondents indicated that the setting apart was in order to perform certain tasks (I.1, I.5, E.17, E.21), whereas others indicated that ordained ministry was more to do with a role than specific functions (I.6, I.10, I.11, E.15, E.25, E.27).

Even when they acknowledged that priests were set apart, a number of participants expressed a resistance to priests being different from other people (I.1, I.4, I.6, 2I.1, E.19). This was picked up in conversation by a member of staff who said,

What hit me most, is that they don’t want to be different, and I guess that really disturbs me because we need to be different, and not only the priests need to be different but Christians need to be different... You are different... when you give your life to Jesus Christ however you want to say that, if you want to say ‘born again’, whatever you want to say, you are different (T).

However, another member of staff thought that she understood where such comments were coming from:

I wonder if it is a reflection of the fact that sometimes the Church is being different in poor ways... and I think a lot of students are really struggling with the notion of how I’m different, as in Christlike, but also, ‘similar’ isn’t a good word, but open and approachable and the sort of person where people feel like they can be real with me, and that’s a struggle I’ve always had... (T).

¹¹ Tomlin, *The Widening Circle*, 143.

There is another interpretation of the participants' reluctance to see priests as different from other people. This recognizes that they are experiencing the discomfort and disorientation of formation. Ordinands are inevitably differentiated from other people as they enter training for a new role in the Church community. As we have seen above in Chapter 7, such experience can be painful and lead to some negativity.

One male respondent, reflecting on his interview transcript two years later when in ordained ministry, very wisely observed, 'I feel that people want it both ways. They want the priest to be different, to somehow be unlike them. Then they also like the priest to be friendly and one of them. It is a strange mixture of authority and sameness. There is some "other worldliness" expected and appreciated, but it needs to be grounded in the here and now in order for a relationship to exist' (2I.6).

Priests are Commissioned for Service

Having indicated that they didn't want to be different, there was also an acknowledgement amongst the participants that priests are different in that they have been commissioned to do a particular job (I.1, I.5), as a 'recognised authorised leader in a church denomination' (E.23). One male interviewee responding two years after the interview wrote, 'Priests do perform tasks that others cannot do – such as presiding over the Eucharist. They have access to other people's lives in a way that many (most) other people do not. They are called by God for a very special service to God and God's people in a way that others are not' (2I.3). This echoes the point made in *Eucharistic Presidency* that at ordination the minister is 'set in a distinctive and permanent relationship to the Church as a whole.'¹² However, as the Lima document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* reminds us, 'the authority of the ordained ministry is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person but a gift for the continuing edification of the body in and for which the minister has been ordained.'¹³ In other words, ordained ministers are set apart in that they are commissioned for the particular purpose of serving the whole Church.

¹² *Eucharistic Presidency*, 31.

¹³ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 22.

Priests are Set Apart not Set Above

The perspective that priests are set apart from but not above others was frequently articulated in the empirical study and expressed clearly by one email respondent who wrote,

A priest performs certain tasks that pertain to the priesthood and in that sense is 'set apart' from others who have equally certain tasks pertaining to their particular calling or vocation. In that respect a priest is different from other people. Having said that I think one has to be careful not to set a priest as being above or superior to other people. Priests are still very human and share our common humanity (E.21).

Many interviewees asserted that a priest was one of the people (I.3, I.5, I.6, I.13, I.14) 'on level ground' (E.25) 'not a pedestal' (I.4) 'modelling a life of faith' (I.11), 'a leader among the people in a sense in the same way as Christ was incarnate and lived and moved and walked among us' (I.1) because 'you can lead from within rather than from a hierarchical position' (I.9). Even when acknowledging that a priest was set apart, there was a consistent reluctance to see the priest as being set above the people.

Greenwood is helpful here in arguing that ordained ministers should be encouraged to understand the nature of their vital and unique authority in terms of relatedness. The relationship between clergy and laity is then informed by a mutual indwelling. He writes,

A church which introduces permanent subordinations within its life reveals its lack of understanding of the mystery of the Trinity and its unwillingness to relate it directly to ecclesiological concepts. In a perichoretic community of love, a self-ordering process takes place in which, although individual persons will fulfil unique and necessary roles, the total ordering is achieved without any one being in a permanently subordinate position to another.¹⁴

One final year female ordinand saw priesthood as relational and for her the relationship was 'much more important' than the role. By relationship she meant 'the relationship between the people and God and yourself and the wider community' (I.11).

¹⁴ Greenwood, *Transforming Priesthood*, 152.

64% of interviewees (I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5, I.6, I.9, I.10, I.13) and 23% of email respondents used the language of a call to ministry (E.15, E.18, E.27). 36% of interviewees (I.5, I.6, I.7, I.10, 2I.3, 2I.7) and 46% of email respondents (E.16, E.18, E.19, E.21, E.22, E.27) referred to priesthood being a vocation. Greenwood also argues that to be a priest is a calling to a unique vocation, but he emphasizes that this vocation is of no greater value than any other. ‘The ordained have no life or ministry in isolation, nor in a permanently higher status, spiritual or material over against any other Christian... There is no difference between clergy and laity in the quality of their Christian authority.’¹⁵

There may be no difference in the quality of their Christian authority but there is a difference in their ministerial authority. Different ministerial authority is attached to each of the offices of a deacon, a priest, and a bishop. As *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* points out, ‘Bishops and presbyters do not participate to a greater degree in the priesthood of Christ; they participate in a different way – not, that is, as individual believers, but in the exercise of their office.’¹⁶

Greenwood is arguing against the clericalism that presumes that clergy are more closely attuned to God and he criticizes the report for perpetuating ‘the concept of the priesthood of Christ being mediated to the Church through the parallel but separate avenues of the whole baptized Church on the one hand and the ordained priests on the other.’¹⁷ In using the terms ‘parallel’ and ‘separate avenues’ he stretches a point. The report asserts that ‘the priesthood of the ordained ministry is not a matter of rights bestowed upon a distinct group of people which are denied to others, but of duties and sacred responsibilities entrusted to some for the sake of the whole Church.’¹⁸ Greenwood seems to have overlooked the distinction made in the report between the authority of the individual and that of the ministerial office.

¹⁵ Greenwood, *Transforming*, 146.

¹⁶ *Priesthood*, 99.

¹⁷ Greenwood, *Transforming Priesthood*, 149.

¹⁸ *Priesthood*, 101.

The Representative Nature of Priesthood

In *God's Reign & Our Unity*, the Anglican-Reformed Commission emphasizes participation, enabling, and representation. It concludes that priests

exercise their priestly ministry neither apart from the priesthood of the whole body, nor by derivation from the priesthood of the whole body, but by virtue of their participation, in the company with the whole body, in the priestly ministry of the risen Christ, and as leaders, examples and enablers for the priestly ministry of the whole body in virtue of the special calling and equipment given to them in ordination. The one so ordained is called to be a focus of unity for the whole body. Ordination is the act which constitutes and acknowledges this special ministry of representation and leadership within the life of the Church both locally and universally.¹⁹

In the empirical study several respondents saw a priest as being 'representative' of 'Jesus' (E.27) or 'Christ' (I.3, 2I.3), 'the Church of England' (E.23) or 'the Church universal' (I.5). One interviewee, responding to her earlier interview transcript, mentioned all three elements: 'Representing both God and people, and the Church' (2I.4). But the most common use of the language of representation came in either direct quotations from, or references to, Michael Ramsey's description of the priest in worship representing 'the people before God and God before the people' (E.22, E.24).²⁰ For one email respondent this was the essence of priesthood (E.16).

Hanson argues that 'Priesthood consists of a ministry of men or women who stand for God to their fellow-men and represent their fellow-men to God.'²¹ He follows Moberly in making a clear distinction between the priest as an intermediary, either substituted or atoning, and the priest as representative and organ of the whole body.²² This is the predominant perspective within the Church of England, although Robin Ward (Principal of the Anglo-Catholic theological training college, St Stephen's House) argues for understanding the ministerial priesthood as participative rather than representative. He identifies ministerial priesthood in the role of Eucharistic president 'as a particular participation in the character of Christ as the priest who

¹⁹ *God's Reign*, 51.

²⁰ Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today*, 16.

²¹ Richard Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1979), 100.

²² R.C. Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood* (London: John Murray, 1919), 241-242; cf. Paul Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 74.

wills his sacrifice to be continued in sacramental mode.’ Ward sees the primary purpose of the priest to be offering the sacramental sacrifice and the sacramental forgiveness of sins. He considers the indelibility of ordination, its sacramental character, to be of fundamental importance; however he claims to avoid any sense of separation and autonomy for the ordained priest by employing a Johannine commitment to a ministry of service.²³ This is a narrower view of priesthood than that contained within the Ordinals of both *The Book of Common Prayer* and *Common Worship*, where the emphasis is on leadership in worship and mission, the collegial and collaborative character of ministry, the biblical image of the Good Shepherd, and the role of the priest in sustaining the Christian community through word and sacrament so that it may grow into Christ and become a living sacrifice.²⁴ None of the participants in the empirical study expressed a participative view of the priesthood despite some of them coming from Anglo-Catholic parishes.

The Call to Holiness

I suggest that it is the way in which the ministerial priesthood is exercised that is representative of Christ. Thus I agree with Hanson that a priestly ministry should be one ‘which is in a powerful and impressive sense a reproduction of Christ’s priesthood in that it is not a ministry that makes arrogant claims for itself and insists upon its privileges and powers, but gives itself unsparingly in Christ’s service, reproducing his humility, his self-abandonment and his love.’²⁵ Hinton argues that the priest’s representative function is most apparent in the leading of worship.²⁶ In order for this representation to be effective, McLaughlin argues, it must be rooted in a desire for God and God’s righteous holiness.²⁷ It is the call to holiness that sums up her vision of priesthood. She declares that ‘The priest is before all things a Christian soul given to prayer, that is the disciplined practice of the presence of God, centred in the Eucharist and grounded in a daily rule of Office and silence... the priest is

²³ Robin Ward, *On Christian Priesthood* (London: Continuum, 2011), 93-94.

²⁴ *Common Worship: Ordination Services*, 124.

²⁵ Hanson, *Christian Priesthood*, 101.

²⁶ Michael Hinton, *The Anglican Parochial Clergy* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 223.

²⁷ Eleanor McLaughlin, ‘Priestly Spirituality’, in Durstan R. McDonald (ed.), *Theology of Priesthood: A Consultation* (Evanston, IL: ATR, 1984), 61.

intercessor for the people before God; also one who mediates the power of God into the world in sacraments and blessing.²⁸

The Hind report identifies one of the three key theological themes that should inform training to be ‘*the ordained ministry should be marked by the holiness that Christ gives to his Church.*’²⁹ Yet there was surprisingly little mention of holiness in the empirical study: only one female interviewee mentioned that ‘Priesthood is about being holy, sacramental’ (2I.7). *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* asserts that ‘the ordained ministry has a representative function, in relation to Christ and to the whole community of faith... to share in the priestly ministry of Christ by lives of consecrated love and service for sake of the whole body.’³⁰ One female respondent came closest to this perspective with the comment that ‘I see a priest as the representative of all that Jesus is and does, by the Spirit – especially in unconditional loving, quality of attention to God and people, and humility that allows the priest to become vulnerable to people who need to know what God is like’ (E.27).

Avis argues that the principle of representativeness is related to the principle of authority for public ministry. He writes, ‘It is not that the person of the ordained minister, as a private individual, represents Christ, as a unique icon of Christ, but that Christ is present in the appointed means of grace ministered by that person with the authority and charisma bestowed in ordination.’³¹ Christ was, however, the model priest for many participants in the empirical study (I.1, I.3, I.6, 2I.3, 2I.14, E.25). One email respondent reported on a bishop’s sermon at an ordination service which talked about priests being ‘examples of/for the examples’ by which he meant priests being examples of people who follow Christ, as examples for both Christians and others. For her this was the essence of priesthood (E.22).

Reconciling the Functional and Ontological Aspects of Priesthood

Greenwood contends that a relational view of ministry outflanks previous disputes as to whether the priest possesses an indelible character or whether the character of

²⁸ McLaughlin, ‘Priestly Spirituality’, 59.

²⁹ *Formation*, 33.

³⁰ *Priesthood*, 100.

³¹ Avis, *Ministry*, 100; cf. *Priesthood*, 99.

ordination is functional or ontological.³² Perhaps this perspective would help those respondents in the empirical study who struggled with reconciling the functional and ontological aspects of priesthood. One interviewee said, ‘I think [priesthood] should be being but I think everybody can only measure doing’ (I.12); and reflecting on the interview transcript two years later she wrote, ‘I still see priesthood as “being” rather than “doing”, but I did have to produce a job description to be ordained!’ (2I.12). Another 22% of respondents saw priesthood as being rather than doing (R.21, I.8, I.10, I.12, E.17, E.19, E.26). One email respondent thought that ‘both aspects are very important but the ontological and the functional aspects have to be well integrated’ (E.24; cf. 2I.5), another noted that ‘the ontological arguments are harder to unpick and define’ (E.16) and a third wrote, ‘Yes we “do” things but it is how we do them that is important’ (E.19).

Priests as Servants

Many respondents saw priesthood as being about service: service to God (I.5, 2I.7), service to the Church (I.11, 2I.14), service to both God and the Church (I.13, 2I.3, E.17, E.19, E.25) and ‘service to God who called me to this vocation, and service to the community, through ministry, worship and teaching’ (E.19). Priesthood was also seen to be about servant ministry (I.1, E.22, E.25), and the role of a servant (I.10). One person pointed out that a priest remains a deacon (E.21); another said that ‘a lot of people talk about servant leadership’ but he thought that it was over-used, preferring ‘kingdom leadership’ (I.1).

Michael Sansom, who was on the staff of the evangelical college Ridley Hall at the time, refers to Hanson in arguing that the ministry exists in order to serve the Church before asserting that ‘If the ordained ministry is a matter of status, it is the status of servant that we are speaking of. If it is a matter of function, it is the function of a servant that we are speaking of. If it is a matter of office, it is the office (*officium* = duty) of a servant.’³³ However, Oppenheimer is wary of stating that ordained ministry is all about service rather than status. She notes that this gradually leads to

³² Greenwood, *Transforming*, 153.

³³ Michael Sansom, ‘The Doctrine of Ordination and the Ordained Ministry’, *Churchman* 96, no. 1 (1982), 17.

service being made the new status, which ‘leaves those outside more beyond the pale than ever.’³⁴ Nevertheless, both ecumenical and Church of England documents highlight the role of priests as servants. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, for instance, declares that ordained ministers ‘fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community.’³⁵ And the Common Worship Ordinal introduces the Declarations with the words, ‘Priests are called to be servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent.’³⁶

Priests as Shepherds

One email respondent wrote, ‘The role of a priest is a combination of representation, leadership, bearer of authority, servant and pastor’ (E.24). A few participants mentioned care (E.15, E.25), as in pastoral care (I.1, E.16, E.26), with one interviewee reflecting on her transcript two years later writing, ‘lead, shepherd and care for God’s people’ (2.I9). The imagery of shepherding was employed by several participants in reflecting on priesthood, for example, ‘The priest also has to keep watch over the flock and look out for any who become lost or led astray, to care for the weaker members etc’ (E.24). As one female participant pointed out, ‘In the ordination service for priests we are told to keep the image of the Good Shepherd before us’ (2I.5). Another explained that

my original sense of calling was to be a shepherd, so you blaze a trail ahead and take everybody with you and that ... encompasses everything from sleeping across the sheepfold at night to protect them, and fighting off the wolves, and the biblical image is the shepherd, and what the shepherds do, taking people to lovely water and lovely food and picking up the strays, and that whole picture of going ahead and nurturing. But the other one for me is... being the person that launches everybody else into whatever God is calling them to be (I.2).

Whereas the metaphor of the shepherd is referred to in historical overviews of the development of a theology of ordained ministry and in the Church of England

³⁴ Helen Oppenheimer, ‘Ministry and Priesthood’ in Eric James (ed.), *Stewards of the Mysteries of God* (London: DLT, 1979), 12-13.

³⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 23.

³⁶ *Ordination Services*, 37.

ordinals, the ecumenical document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* is one of the few to expound the image of the shepherd for ordained ministers today: ‘As pastors, under Jesus Christ the chief shepherd, they assemble and guide the dispersed people of God, in anticipation of the coming Kingdom.’³⁷

Priests as Enablers

The final year male ordinand who introduced the concept of kingdom leadership said that it was ‘very much focused on helping people to grow, helping spiritually, caring for their spiritual wellbeing, the ideas of pastoring but also this sense of forward looking and hope and wanting to move forward to what God has in terms of his kingdom’ (I.1). This seems to combine both the pastor and the prophet. This respondent was the one who came closest to articulating the concept of the priest watching ‘for signs of God’s new creation.’³⁸ Others who expressed similar perspectives were one email respondent who suggested that a priest should be ‘working with others to bring about the kingdom’ (E.26), and another who wrote that the priest is ‘a catalyst for change and growth’ (E.27).

A first year male interviewee admitted that ‘I am quite confused... this issue of what a priest is... it’s very much an unresolved thing for me at the moment’ (I.10). Two years later and recently ordained, he wrote that he was ‘taken with Alan Billings’ description of the priest as someone who makes plausible an interest in the possibility of God. A priest is certainly there for others – called always to point to the reality of God and to witness to the hints of divine saving presence that they have been privileged to encounter’ (2I.10). This perspective echoes Greenwood’s suggestion that the renewal of the Church requires priests exercising *episkope* to be navigators, who are described as people of daring, resilience and intuition, ‘walking the boundaries, building bridges or standing at the crossroads,’³⁹ in order to help the community discern a sense of direction.

³⁷ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 21.

³⁸ *Ordination Services*, 37.

³⁹ *Parish Priests*, 89.

The Hind report identifies the second of the three key theological themes that should inform training to be that the ‘*ordained ministry should enable the vocation of the Church as a whole, which it receives from Christ, to be fulfilled.*’⁴⁰ There was some mention of enabling in the empirical study. A first year female ordinand said that priesthood was ‘not doing everything but being a person that is enabling others to become the people that God wants them to be and the church the place that God wants it to be’ (I.2; cf. E.26, E.27). A second year female ordinand said that she hoped her role would be ‘to travel with people on their journeys.’ She acknowledged that some would not know Jesus and others would have ‘a mature relationship’ with him and hoped that she could ‘facilitate that as a priest’ (I.9). An email respondent wrote that priesthood was ‘the enabling of others to receive Christ in every way possible – from Eucharist, worship and prayer – from learning and living in a broken world’ (E.27).

The Tasks of Ordained Ministry

Alan Billings asserts that priesthood is about making God findable, or possible.⁴¹ He writes, ‘the Jewish priest in the Temple enabled sinful, Jewish worshippers to draw near to the Holy One through the shedding of animal blood in sacrifice; Jesus enabled Jew and Gentile to approach the Father through his own sacrificial life and death; the Church enables all people to find God through its proclamation of Christ in word and sacrament.’⁴² In this perspective the task of the ordained person is to support the mission of the Church in making God possible, making God findable. According to Billings, this task has a twofold focus of building up the body of Christ and having a representative role within the parish. Thus he argues that the two main priorities for the ordained person are to teach the gospel (in the context of strident secular humanism), and to provide pastoral care (like the incarnational ministry of the traditional parson).⁴³ It is interesting to observe that whereas some participants in the empirical study mentioned pastoral care (I.1, E.15, E.16, E.24, E.25, E.26), only one mentioned teaching (E.19).

⁴⁰ *Formation*, 34.

⁴¹ Alan Billings, *Lost Church: Why We Must Find It Again* (London: SPCK, 2013), 44; cf. *Making GOD Possible: The Task of Ordained Ministry Present and Future* (London: SPCK, 2010), 49.

⁴² Billings, *Lost Church*, 44.

⁴³ Billings, *Making GOD Possible*, 156.

50% of interviewees (I.3, I.4, I.5, I.9, I.12, I.13, I.14) and 46% of email respondents (E.16, E.17, E.18, E.21, E.22, E.25) referred to tasks performed by priests. Amongst the functional aspects of priesthood mentioned, perhaps the most obvious example was the sacraments (I.1, I.5, I.14, E.21, E.26, 2I.4, 2I.9), specifically celebrating Communion (E.22, E.25), or presiding at the Eucharist (I.9, 2I.3, E.26, E.27). Even those who do not hold Ward's view of the sacerdotal nature of the ordained priesthood recognize that the Eucharist is a central and symbolic rite of the Church's existence, and that the priest has a particular role in presiding at the celebration of that rite. The Common Worship Ordinal includes in the Declarations 'They are to preside at the Lord's table and lead his people in worship, offering with them a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.'⁴⁴ The emphasis in Anglican theology is on presiding, leading, and maintaining good order. As *Eucharistic Presidency* declares, 'The main purpose of ordination is not to provide eucharistic presidents but to provide publicly recognized oversight of a community.'⁴⁵ It is, however, in presiding at the Eucharist that the ordained minister is the visible focus of the communion between Christ and the members of his body,⁴⁶ and this visibility can lead to the perception that the ordained person has a special position, offering on behalf of the people rather than offering with them a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Whereas the interview question stated that some people see a priest as primarily a person who performs certain tasks, it did not ask participants to enumerate those tasks. Nevertheless, one person wrote that 'the priest presides and absolves and blesses' (2I.4). A few mentioned conducting occasional offices: baptisms (I.6, I.12, 2I.3), marriages (I.5, I.12) and funerals (I.12, 2I.3). Other things a priest may do, which were mentioned by participants, included leading worship or services (I.6, I.12, E.19), preaching (E.26), teaching (E.19), visiting (I.12), listening (I.14), and praying (E.16, E.26, E.27, 2I.14). The areas not mentioned in the empirical study which are included in the Declarations in the Common Worship Ordinal concern mission and evangelism: resisting evil, supporting the weak, defending the poor, searching for God's children 'in the wilderness of this world's temptations,' and

⁴⁴ *Ordination Services*, 37.

⁴⁵ *Eucharistic Presidency*, 55; cf. *God's Reign*, 53.

⁴⁶ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 22.

guiding them ‘through its confusions, that they may be saved through Christ.’⁴⁷ This is surprising considering that more of the participants identified themselves as coming from an evangelical background than from any other tradition. I would have expected them to see mission and evangelism as priorities and so mention them.

Different Expectations of Priests

Some participants indicated that priesthood could be lived out in different ways: a first year female ordinand pointed out that ‘in a parish there is quite an emphasis on sacramental whereas maybe in a university chaplaincy, or a school chaplaincy, is not quite so great, there’s more emphasis on the pastoral’ (I.14). A second year female interviewee said that ‘some people will be church managers, some people will be contemplative pastors.’ She saw herself as the latter (I.7). Two years later she wrote, ‘Being a priest isn’t task oriented, it is about serving, suffering and being close to God’ (2I.7). A third year female interviewee saw herself as being called to a ministry in the workplace and contrasted her own view of priesthood as ‘being’ with ‘churchgoers’ who ‘see the priest as someone who does the work’ (I.12). A contemporary said that priesthood ‘can’t just be about performing tasks because the tasks that you feel called to perform may not be the ones that people either expect or want’ (I.13). A second year female ordinand expressed concern that ‘the danger in having such a professional priesthood is that the rest of God’s people think they can’t do it or will leave it to the priest to do’ (I.5). This reflects the tension between serving the people and serving God, between pastoral care of the congregation and ensuring that the Church is true to her missionary calling. As *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry* points out, the priest is ordained to speak and act in the name of the community but also to speak and act in the name of Christ to the community.⁴⁸

One female respondent, reflecting on her interview transcript two years later in ordained ministry, wrote that she now had ‘experience of two church communities who see the priest differently from each other (one as the set apart leader and fixer, the other as a more relational co-worker).’ She wrote that she had learnt to recognize that ‘their view of priesthood is at least if not more important than mine when it

⁴⁷ *Ordination Services*, 37.

⁴⁸ *Priesthood*, 99.

comes to affecting what I do and how I behave' (2I.11). This exemplifies the different expectations congregations have of their ordained ministers, whether it reveals different understandings of priesthood is debatable. The parish priest needs to maintain a balance between the perspective of the local context and the collegiality of the clergy. A priest is ordained not in isolation to serve a particular community but in order to work with their Bishop and fellow ministers in the Christian Church. As the Ordinal declares, priests share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church and it is with the Bishop and their fellow presbyters that they are to sustain the community of the faithful.⁴⁹ One email respondent acknowledged one aspect of this in writing, 'how other people see a priest is going to be the biggest challenge' and, 'as a woman, one has the potential to cause pain to people who prayerfully feel that our ministry is not right' (E.26).

Priests as Imitators of Christ

One female email respondent produced a coherent argument for why she was not happy with the term 'priest' and, although she acknowledged that she would be 'priested,' she saw 'that as a technical term and shall never refer to myself or any other ordained minister as a priest.' She concluded with the claim that 'the understanding of ordained ministry in the Church of England is that the minister will undertake certain tasks which no one else is permitted to do such as preside at Communion, but it is not these tasks which define what ministry is.' She saw ministry as carrying 'the huge responsibility of needing to be worthy of being imitated,' as the minister imitated Christ, and helped others to become more like Christ (E.25). She came from a reformed background and her perspective is clearly articulated by the Anglican-Reformed Commission's Report, *God's Reign & Our Unity*, which states that 'Ministerial leadership in the Church may be defined as following Jesus in the way of the cross so that others in turn may be enabled to follow in the same way.'⁵⁰ This perspective places an immense weight of expectation on the ordained minister in contrast to the emphasis on the office of priesthood representing Christ rather than the individual person. However, in practice it is always easier for people to follow an individual rather than an abstract ideal.

⁴⁹ *Ordination Services*, 32.

⁵⁰ *God's Reign*, 48.

In the Common Worship Ordination Prayer the bishop and priests together lay their hands on the head of the ordinand and the bishop says, ‘Send down the Holy Spirit on your servant *N* for the office and work of a priest in your Church.’⁵¹ There is a noticeable lack of mention of the grace of God and the role of the Holy Spirit in ordination and ordained ministry amongst the respondents in the empirical study. This may illustrate Greenwood’s concern that when notions of ordained ministry are derived from the person and work of Jesus, there is a corresponding neglect of reflection on the work of the Spirit.⁵²

Concluding Comments

The majority of the participants in the empirical study struggled with the concept of the distinctive ministry of the ordained. They resisted the idea of being set apart to be different. Nevertheless, some of them did acknowledge that the ordained are commissioned, and given ministerial authority. The ordinands seemed more comfortable with the language of leadership, although many insisted that they would lead from within rather than above. Some of them referred to the representative nature of priesthood, and the need for holiness. This was articulated most often in terms of imitating Christ.

The participants viewed priests as servants, shepherds, and enablers. However, the enabling seemed to be more concerned with spiritual growth than mission. They mentioned the tasks of celebrating the sacraments, the occasional offices, leading worship, preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. There was little mention of the prophetic role of priests, or the tasks of mission and evangelism, which is surprising considering that this is one of the selection criteria, and a priority for the national Church. Some of the participants expressed awareness that there are different expectations on priests in different contexts but they did not seem to balance the local perspective with that of being a priest in the whole Church.

As expected, the ordinands in the empirical study expressed their understanding of priesthood in the language found in the Common Worship Ordinal, and deriving

⁵¹ *Ordination Services*, 43.

⁵² Greenwood, *Parish Priests*, 87.

from scripture, rather than that of the Introduction produced by the House of Bishops.⁵³ There was no mention of serving the unity of the Church, or of being ordained into the whole Church, only the occasional reference to the ordained minister being sent to enable the whole Church to fulfil its vocation to mission, and a general reluctance to being set apart. Thus the participants did not articulate an understanding of the ordained ministry as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. This may be due to the wording of the interview question, which asked participants how they would describe a priest in relation to someone who performs tasks, or someone who is set apart to be different from other people.

⁵³ Cf. p.20-21 above.

Conclusion

Training for Ordination to the Priesthood in the Church of England

In order to set the empirical study within its broader context, Chapter 1 reviewed the claim that Anglicans derive their understanding of ministry from the witness of scripture, as interpreted through the ages, and reflected upon in the light of contemporary experience. Like an aeroplane built according to variable geometry, that understanding has changed and developed in response to its environment. The most significant historical context was the Reformation, resulting in a move in a Protestant direction as a reaction against some of the medieval practices of ordained ministry. During the latter half of the twentieth century, partly under the influence of ecumenical discussions, the pendulum swung back in the direction of a more Anglo-Catholic understanding of priesthood. Whereas many of the legalities surrounding ordained ministry date back to the Reformation, many of the powerful metaphors employed to describe ordained ministry (in the ordinals, official Church of England reports, and by participants in the empirical study) are taken from scripture.

The official Church of England's understanding of ordained ministry today is set out in the introduction to the Common Worship 'Ordination of Priests, also called Presbyters.' This emphasizes the priest's role as leader of the people and collaborator with the bishop and fellow priests. It points to the Good Shepherd as the role model, and identifies the priest as minister of both word and sacrament. It declares that the purpose of the ordained ministry is to enable the growth of all Christians. The ordinal also employs imagery from scripture in describing priests as 'servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent', and 'messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord.'¹ Both doctrine and practice are set out in the liturgy and rubrics of the ordinals. However, Anglicans tend to learn about ordained ministry mainly through observing those who exercise it, and through experiencing it themselves.

¹ *Ordination Services*, 32, 37.

Following the examination of the Church of England's understanding of the ministry into which candidates are to be ordained, Chapter 2 summarized the historical development of the institutions providing training for ordination since 1800. It noted how changes in society and the variety of people offering themselves for ordination over the last two centuries have led to increasingly diverse types of institutions and different patterns of training. This brief historical overview locates the regional training course of the empirical study within its historical context, whilst providing background information about the growing influence of central church structures, and the expectations placed on ministerial training institutions in terms of validation of the institution and approval of the curriculum.

Perhaps the most significant factor for the current empirical study has been the development of adult education theory and its adoption by theological educators. Over the last two hundred years, concentration on the transmission of knowledge about academic theology has been superseded by a stress on theological reflection on experience. Furthermore, the insistence on relocation to a residential college for a period of intensive study in preparation for ministry has diminished in favour of engagement in ministry throughout training, with shorter periods in residence. These developments accompanied the shift in focus for ministerial training from socialization into the clerical caste to training for a profession.

Defining Formation

During the second half of the twentieth century, official Church of England reports placed a growing emphasis on formation in training for ordination. In order to understand what might be meant by the word 'formation' in this context, Chapter 3 traced its first tentative appearance in the de Bunsen report on *Theological Colleges for Tomorrow* in 1968 through to its abundant usage in the Hind report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* in 2003, and the subsequent documentation concerning the Common Awards. This involved an examination of the various phrases and contexts within which the word 'formation' appeared. These included 'community formation', 'spiritual formation', 'personal formation', 'theological formation', 'ministerial formation', 'character formation', and formation 'in wisdom and habit of life'. The discussion recorded the different connotations attached to

‘formation’ in the major reports *Patterns of Ministerial Training, Education for the Church’s Ministry* (ACCM 22) and its successors, and *Ministry and Mission*. It also acknowledged the contributions of key individuals, such as Peter Baelz and Hugh Melinsky, who were involved in attributing particular significance to formation.

The concept of formation had become so important by the time of the publication of the interim report *The Structure and Funding of Ordination Training* in 2002 that responses to that report forced the inclusion of major new sections specifically concerning the language and meaning of formation in the final report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*. Despite this, however, there was still no clear definition of the meaning of ‘formation’ in the context of training for ordination in the Church of England, rather the acknowledgement that ‘formation’ was at best ‘a convenient shorthand’, alluding to ‘elements of *transformation*’, as the Spirit of God worked in fallible human beings, ‘*forming* Christ in them.’²

The Preface to Common Awards came closer to providing a definition of formation in the context of training for ordination in stating that, ‘Formation relates to the transformation of learners into the likeness of Christ and into ways of being, knowing and doing that inhabit the kingdom of God and reflect the God-given callings for which learners are being prepared.’³ However, there is no explanation of what is meant by the phrase ‘ways of being, knowing and doing that inhabit the kingdom of God.’ It is unclear whether this describes Christ so that becoming more like Christ involves inhabiting the kingdom of God more fully. To ‘reflect the God-given callings for which learners are being prepared’ could be understood as induction into the traditions of ordained ministry. This statement invites further reflection, and it requires some clarification.

The survey of official Church of England documentation revealed the development of various related and overlapping understandings of formation. These included formation as integration, as induction into a tradition, and as preparation for ministry, as well as transformation into the likeness of Christ. The official Church reports and the responses from ordinands in the empirical study both demonstrate

² *Formation for Ministry*, 38.

³ Eeva-Maria John, *Preface*.

that it is easier to articulate how formation happens than it is to define the meaning of the word ‘formation.’ According to the Church of England publications, formation for ordained ministry is fostered through a deepening spiritual life, inhabiting theology, reflection on experience, conversation, and experience of corporate life (preferably in residence). The combination of all of these elements then establishes the patterns of study, holiness, and competence necessary for sustaining the ordained minister in their public role.

In the empirical study, described in Chapter 4, ordinands on a regional training course articulated an understanding of formation in terms of a process of change and development in preparation for ordained ministry. They employed metaphors of shaping, growing, and being on a journey. They emphasized that formation was lifelong, beginning before training for ordination, and continuing beyond it. They asserted that formation affected the whole person, with the aim of becoming more like Christ. When participants were offered a selection of images to describe their view of formation, the most popular choice was ‘a potter working clay,’ followed by ‘a gardener tending plants.’ Chapter 5 provided a summary of the findings.

The discussion between the findings of the empirical study and some educational theories (particularly Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory)⁴ in Chapter 6 concluded that formation for ordained ministry occurs within the context of relationships: that is both relationship with God and relationships within the community of the training institution. Although both official documentation and ordinands recognize that God is the agent of formation, when recounting their experiences of formation the majority of participants referred to the significance of encounters with other people rather than with God. This may be due to several factors: the inexorable experience of socialization into a new human community with a developing interdependence; because the ordinands have not yet reflected theologically on their experiences of formation; because they do not yet have the theological language to articulate their experiences of being formed by God; or even because they cannot yet fully perceive that formation.

⁴ Cf. Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions; Learning as Transformation*.

According to both the academic literature and the responses from ordinands, people are formed when they are challenged to reconsider their own perspectives on something. This is usually the result of encountering difference. Training for ordination entails encountering different people, opinions and ideas whilst studying academic theology with peers. It involves engaging in different spiritual practices whilst worshipping together within a new community. It offers the opportunity to discover God in unfamiliar contexts on placements whilst beginning to exercise ministry in the new role of trainee clergy.

Formation may happen suddenly through a particular (convictional) experience, or gradually over time. It is when ordinands embrace that experience (however painful) and seek God in the midst of it, that they may become more like Christ. That process of transformation into the likeness of Christ involves re-examining feelings, thoughts, and actions in discovering and adopting a new perspective. It involves integrating all that has been learnt through reflection on the experience of encountering difference. The evidence for formation is not only a new way of seeing but also a new, more Christ-like, way of being and behaving towards both God and the world.

This formation is not simply for the benefit of the individual but is preparation for a person's future role as a priest in God's Church. Therefore, I suggest this definition for further debate: 'Formation, in the context of training for ordination in the Church of England, is the process of becoming more like Christ so that, through a ministry of word and sacrament, the Church may become the living body of Christ.'

Implications for the Church of England

Since, as noted above, participants in the empirical study argued that formation is lifelong – beginning before training for ordination and continuing after it – training institutions need to take much more account of prior formation, and, where appropriate, facilitate its integration into training for ordination, or, if necessary, challenge it. This can be done through teaching methods of theological reflection, and through the modelling of their use by staff. IME should also prepare ordinands for continuing ministerial education and formation after ordination through instilling

good habits of theological study and reflection on experience. Such foundations assist in making more obvious the connections between academic theology and practical ministry. They also encourage the development of lifelong reflective practitioners.

When participants in the empirical study were asked to identify the locus of formation, they reported that the academic and spiritual aspects of formation were most significant, especially when they were allowed to influence each other. Such integration should be fostered during training through studying in an environment of prayer, with time set aside for both corporate prayer and personal devotions, as well as prayer during lectures, seminars, and community gatherings. This may be enhanced through encouraging ordinands to engage with God in different ways throughout the process of formation. Whilst in the security of the training community, ordinands may be introduced to different traditions of spirituality. They should also be urged to adopt a daily pattern of prayer to sustain them throughout their ministry. Such experiences will also introduce ordinands to resources for helping their future parishioners to integrate prayer into their daily lives.

The ordinands' stated desire to become more like Christ can be a motivation for studying Christ and learning about how Christians throughout the history of the Church have studied Christ in order to become more like him. Ordinands should be expected to have a spiritual director, or soul friend, someone outside the training community with whom they can discuss their spiritual life, and the impact of their training on their understanding of who God is, and their relationship with God.

As with those in ordained ministry, it is the prayer life that suffers most when ordinands are under pressure, hence it is vital that good habits are put in place before ordination. There are different patterns of community life for those training at residential colleges and those on regional training courses: the latter are more likely to be widely dispersed and often have different competing demands on their time. The Church must determine how appropriate and sustaining patterns of prayer may be fostered in each pathway. A further consideration is that, after ordination, ministers often have to create their own community of prayer, or pray alone.

In the empirical study, ordinands reported experiencing formation as challenging, painful, and often a struggle. Therefore, sufficient nurture and good support networks are essential during IME. The shared experience of the course community meeting in residence (even part-time) was seen to be vital for formation. It was often the informal conversations over meals, whilst travelling together, and in common rooms, outside the formal periods of study that proved to be important for both building community and discussing issues. Therefore, all training institutions should allow space for, and facilitate, such encounters.

Many participants in the empirical study acknowledged that studying and preparing worship in small groups was beneficial for formation. It was when they had to work with ordinands who held different views that they were forced to reconsider their own perspectives. Therefore, all IME should include working in small groups with ordinands from different theological, ecclesiastical, spiritual and cultural traditions. This also prepares ordinands for ministry in the Church of England where the majority of parishes are of a central tradition, and most congregations consist of people who come from a variety of backgrounds and a range of different traditions.

Members of staff were reported to be both important role models, and sources of support. Thus, the appointment of suitable staff is crucial. Participants in the empirical study appreciated members of staff who were wise, and prayerful. They admired good preachers, and teachers. They esteemed reflective practitioners. They valued those who were approachable, good listeners, and encouraging. They were then willing to listen to challenge and correction from such members of staff.

Participants in the empirical study expressed concern about the workload of a regional training course, especially for those with family commitments and in full time employment. The constant pressure to prioritise, with a perpetual juggling of responsibilities, may be a preview of life as an ordained minister but it is not healthy, and it does not foster wise habits for lifelong ministry. With the recent introduction of Common Awards, it may be an opportune time to consider which elements of ministerial training must be completed prior to ordination, and which can be undertaken during the curacy, or subsequent ministerial education. It may also be appropriate to calculate the time required to prepare candidates for ordained ministry

in terms of academic study (contact time, preparation, and completion of assessments), practical placements, time spent in groupwork, and individual meetings with tutorial staff. Does three years on a regional training course allow sufficient time for the necessary formation? Furthermore, do three years on a regional training course equate to two years at a residential college?

If one theme in particular emerges from the empirical study, then it must be encountering difference (whether that be in ideas, worship styles, personalities, or placements) in such a way that forces individuals in formation to look again at themselves and to reconsider their own perspectives. The provision of someone alongside the ordinand during this process to facilitate reflection on ‘Who am I?’ is key to the integration of the experience and hence formation. That person should be a personal tutor, who is well trained for this important role. The personal tutor is neither a counsellor, nor a spiritual director, although there are overlaps with both of these roles in helping a person to reflect on their own beliefs, and behaviours. For the purposes of discerning whether it is right for the person to be ordained in the Church of England, the personal tutor must be able to feed into the reporting process on the ordinand.

One of the areas for discussion during training should be the ordinands’ understanding of the ministry for which they are candidates. The empirical study revealed several differences in understanding between the ordinands and the official statements from the Church of England. Perhaps the most important one is that of entering a distinctive ministry in which the ordained priest is set apart in order to facilitate the ministry of the whole Church. The ordinands’ struggle with this concept may be due to their changing role, and how they are perceived by others, and therefore related to the question ‘Who am I?’ It may be because they are concentrating on their own particular perspective rather than Anglican theology. Nevertheless, it is concerning that there was some resistance to being different, that there was no articulation of the larger perspective of becoming a member of the clergy, who are called to work together, of being part of the wider Church of England, and indeed the Anglican Communion. This may be due to the nature of the question posed during the empirical study. However, the Church of England needs to ensure that candidates for ordained ministry understand the ministry for which they

are offering themselves, not just in terms of their experience of the ministry of the ordained but also the theology articulated in official documents, the ordinals, and Canon Law.

Areas for Further Study

The empirical study was a case study of one regional training course. In order to check the reliability and validity of these findings, the study should be repeated, and comparisons need to be made with those training residentially, and on mixed-mode pathways.

The findings of the empirical study have supported the theory that formation is a process of change, one which occurs at a profound personal level, and one which takes time. The majority of participants were in training for three years on a regional course. Many of them reported an experience of disorientation and reorientation during this time. An area for further study would be to discern whether there is a minimum, or optimum, length of training for ordination from the perspective of formation. A related question is whether two years in full-time residential training allows sufficient time for the disorientation and reorientation when ordinands are beginning to discuss curacies (and look to ordained ministry) before the end of their first year in training.

The current empirical research was conducted in snapshots over a period of two years. The Church of England could benefit from conducting further longitudinal studies in two areas. The first of these concerns discovering whether those ordinands who have integrated their academic study with their spiritual life are more likely to be lifelong reflective practitioners than those who have kept them separate. Furthermore, is there any correlation between those who have failed to integrate their academic study with their spiritual life and a struggle with exercising ordained ministry leading to an eventual withdrawal from it? The second area concerns investigating what implications the mismatch in understanding of ordained ministry between the ordinands in training and official Church of England publications may have for their subsequent ministry.

The recent introduction of Common Awards with a core curriculum provides an opportunity to investigate whether this shared core has any influence on the ordinands' understanding and experiences of formation for ordained ministry in the Church of England.

Having investigated the Church of England's understanding of ordained ministry, and surveyed the history of training for that ministry over the last two hundred years, this thesis has traced and analyzed the use of the language of formation in a large range of official Church of England publications. By means of a thorough empirical study of one regional training course, it has contributed the perspectives of those in training to the discussion about formation. It has examined both their understanding and their experience of formation, along with their understanding of the ministerial priesthood for which they were being prepared. This exploration highlights some differences in understanding between the institution of the Church of England and the ordinands in training. The conclusion has then offered a working definition of formation within the context of training for ordination in the Church of England for further discussion, noted some implications for the Church, and suggested some areas for further study.

Appendix A: The Questionnaire

The language of formation in ordination training

This questionnaire forms part of Sue Groom's research towards a Doctorate in Ministry at the University of Durham.

Understanding Formation

1. What words would you use to describe your understanding of formation?
Please write a few words, at most two sentences.

2. Is 'formation' a good word to use in relation to your training for ordained ministry?

Please tick the relevant box.

Yes ☐ *If yes, then please answer question 2a.*

No ☐ *If no, then please answer question 2b.*

2a. In what ways is 'formation' a good word to use?

Please write at most two sentences.

2b. Could you suggest a better word?

If so, please write it here:

3. Below are images which have been used to describe formation.

Please choose the image which best captures your view of formation and put a tick in the appropriate box.

A crucible ☐

A furnace ☐

A gardener tending plants ☐

A mirror being held up to show a person's reflection ☐

A potter working clay ☐

Stamping an image on a coin ☐

Someone unpacking and repacking a suitcase ☐

Melting wax ☐

Experiencing Formation

4. What does it feel like to be in a process of formation?

Please tick the box which represents the extent to which each metaphor expresses your own experience of formation.

	Not at all				A lot
	1	2	3	4	5
being forged like steel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
growing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
being hammered into shape	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
plasticine being moulded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a pebble being tossed and washed in the tide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
clay in the hands of the potter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
changing the way I think	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
unpacking and repacking a suitcase	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
having an image stamped on me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
being tended and nurtured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
wax being melted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Which other words or images would you use to describe your experience of formation for ordination?

6. Which year group are you a member of?

Please tick the relevant box.

3 ☐

2 ☐

1 ☐

other ☐

7. Have you completed training for Reader ministry?

Please tick the relevant box.

Yes ☐ *If yes, please answer question 7a.*

No ☐ *If no, please go to question 8.*

7a. When did you complete your Reader training?

Please tick the relevant box.

Before 2000 ☐

2000-2005 ☐

Since 2005 ☐

8. Which academic qualification are you working towards?

Please tick the relevant box.

DipHE ☐

BA ☐

MA ☐

Other ☐

9. How old are you?

Please tick the relevant box.

30-39 ☐

40-49 ☐

50-59 ☐

60-69 ☐

10. What is your gender?

Please tick the relevant box.

Male ☐

Female ☐

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

If you would be willing to be interviewed by Sue Groom about formation please include your name and email address.

Name: Email address:

Appendix B: Language of Formation: Participant Information Sheet

Working Title: The Language of Formation in Ordination Training

Researcher: Revd Sue Groom

Supervisors: Revd Dr Roger Walton and Revd Dr Stephen Barton

This research is part of the work towards a Doctorate in Ministry from the University of Durham.

There is a lot written about formation, particularly from the perspective of theological educators. However few of those who write about formation for ordained ministry refer to their own experience of formation. And there is a significant gap in the literature recording the experience of those being formed. This research proposes to ask those in initial ministerial education to reflect on and articulate their own experience of formation through the use of metaphorical language. In doing so it aims to make explicit those aspects of training which are formative for ordinands and to provide a clearer definition of 'formation' in this context.

When you completed the questionnaire about formation you indicated that you would be willing to be interviewed. Thank you.

Any information that you provide during the interview will be kept confidential. You will not be identified or identifiable in any way. Data are anonymized when they are entered into the computer and analysis will be conducted at an aggregate level.

If you have any further questions you can contact me via this address:

s.a.groom@durham.ac.uk

My supervisors can be contacted as follows:

The Revd Dr Roger Walton

r.l.walton@durham.ac.uk

The Revd Dr Stephen Barton

s.c.barton@durham.ac.uk

Language of Formation: Participant Consent Form

Working Title: The Language of Formation in Ordination Training

Researcher: Revd Sue Groom

Supervisors: Revd Dr Roger Walton and Revd Dr Stephen Barton

- I have read the accompanying Participation Information Sheet outlining the aims and objectives of this project and the methods of the project have been explained to me.
- I understand them and I agree to participate.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss the study.
- I understand the purpose of the project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any time and without having to give a reason for withdrawing.
- I understand that information gained during this study will only be used in the DMin thesis and that, if further use of this data is required at a later date for a different project, then my consent will be sought a second time.
- I understand that I will not be identified in the final written dissertation and that all information relating to me will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audio taped during the interview.
- I understand that the information I provide will not be stored in a way which makes it freely available to any party beyond the student researcher responsible for conducting the project and the academic staff responsible for supervising and assessing this piece of work.
- I understand that if I have any further questions or concerns about this project, I may contact the researcher and/or the academic members of staff responsible for supervising the project.

Signed:

Print name and date:

Appendix C: Questions for the Semi-Structured Interviews

1. What do you understand by the word ‘formation’ in the context of training for ordination?

This relates to questions 1-3 of the questionnaire.

Some people seem to use biblical language and imagery and others use language from their everyday experience. Where do you think the language you instinctively use comes from? Have you been aware of a change in this during your training for ordination? If so, how?

2. How would you describe your own experience of formation? What has it felt like?

This relates to questions 4-5 of the questionnaire.

Have there been any particular experiences that have been formative since you completed the questionnaire during Easter School?

3. Are there any biblical metaphors or phrases which you find helpful in describing your experience?

If need suggestions are needed, mention these: potter, gardener, renewing minds, and imitating Christ.

This seeks to elicit biblical language and metaphor if it has not already been used. It will also discern whether metaphors are taken from the Old Testament or from Paul’s letters.

4. Some people say formation concerns educating the mind, others focus on spiritual growth, others concentrate on developing character, and others skills for professional ministry: Do you think any aspect of yourself has been particularly formed during your training?

Please give examples of how different aspects have been formed.

This question ascertains whether it is possible for participants to discern a primary locus of formation or whether it is more a case of the whole person being formed.

5. Is there a part of your training which you have particularly enjoyed: academic study, tutorial groups, residential weekends, developing ministry work, or your placement? Why? Which aspect have you put most energy into?

This attempts to discern any correlation between level of engagement and perceived locus of formation.

6. Can you describe a particular person, experience, subject, location, or event which has been noticeably formative for you during your ordination training? How was this formative?

This allows for the influence of other factors, such as the staff, the location of the residential components, or even something outside the course which may be formative for an individual.

7. Some people see a priest as primarily as a person who performs certain tasks, others see a priest as a person who is set apart to be different from other people. How would you describe a priest in relation to these two views? How do you see priesthood? What is its essence?

This question seeks to ascertain the participants' theological perspective on priesthood, whether they tend towards an ontological or functional view.

Appendix D: Post-Interview Review Form: Interview number

- Personal reflections on the experience
- How successful and why?
- Interesting aspects of the interview context?
- Any problems? How to avoid them next time?
- Any interesting conversational data not on the tape?
- Peculiarities of speech / extraneous noise which may affect interpretation of recording?

Interviewee :

Year Group:

Course:

Age:

Gender:

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